



2 Markets tick higher in cautious trade as L S polls begin



5 Rahul must speak up on raids against Kamal Nath's aides: Irani



6 S Korea court overturns ban on abortion law

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GUWAHATI ■ FRIDAY ■ APRIL 12, 2019

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68 % polling in Assam in first phase

GUWAHATI, APR 11: At least 68 per cent of the voters exercised their franchise in the first phase

LOK SABHA POLLS

of Lok Sabha polling in five constituencies in Assam on Thursday, a top election official said.

The polling percentage is likely to increase further as hundreds of people were still in the queue around 5 pm.

Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Chandra Sahu said that as per latest information 68 per cent of the voters have cast their votes in five constituencies.

"This voting percentage will go up further as many people are still in the queue. Those who entered the polling centres by 5 pm will be allowed to vote," he added.

Sahu informed that there were reports of malfunctioning of EVMs from some booths and defective machines have been replaced.

"As per the initial reports, around 100 VVPATS were replaced, while 20 units of control and ballot units were changed. The control unit and ballot unit are changed in pair always. These figures are also likely to go up slightly as we have not received the final numbers from the centres yet," the CEO said.

Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Kaliabor, Tez-

pur and Lakhimpur Lok Sabha constituencies have an electorate of 76,03,458, including 38,65,334 males, 37,37,970 females and 154 of the third gender, who will decide the fate of 41

candidates.

Jorhat recorded the highest of 72 per cent polling till 5 pm, followed

ly. Voting took place across 9,574 election booths, manned by over 42,000 polling personnel and 180 companies of Central security forces and the state.

There was all-round enthusiasm among all sections of voters in all the five constituencies to exercise their franchise since early morn-

ing. Voting took place across 9,574 election booths, manned by over 42,000 polling personnel and 180 companies of Central security forces and the state.

Most of the 225 model polling stations have been decorated with balloons and flowers, while the first voter was offered the traditional Assamese 'gamocha'.

In many polling stations, 'Selfie Point' have been set up where voters, both young and old, were seen taking selfies after exercising their franchise.

Among the prominent people to cast their votes in the first half of the day was Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal at 153 Sahityarathi Lakshminath Bezbaroa Sahitya Sabha Bhavan in Dibrugarh and former CM Tarun Gogoi along with his wife Dolly and son Gaurav, who is the sitting MP and contesting Congress candidate from Kaliabor.

Lakhimpur Congress candidate Anil Borgohain was the first to cast his ballot at an all-woman polling booth, while his BJP rival and sitting MP Pradan Barua exercised his franchise at Dhemaji.

Jorhat BJP candidate and state Power Minister Tapan Gogoi and his Congress rival Sushanta Borgohain, former Union Minister and Dibrugarh Congress candidate Paban Singh Ghatowar and Kaliabor AGP-BJP alliance candidate Monimadhab Mahanta accompanied by his (Contd. on P-3)

EC transfers Assam returning officer

GUWAHATI, APR 11: The Election Commission Thursday transferred the returning officer of Karimganj Lok Sabha constituency of Assam after receiving complaints against him from the central observers.

Phoni Bhushan Roy, who is also the Deputy Commissioner of Karimganj district, was shifted on a day when the first phase Lok Sabha poll was held in five other constituencies of the state.

Roy was replaced by M S Manivannan, director of the state agriculture department, sources in the state CEO's office said here.

The sources said the central observers have complained to the EC against Roy regarding his "non-performance and lack of knowledge" about the constituency.

The EC had sent Abhinav Chandra as the General Observer of the Karimganj Lok Sabha seat, while Sanjeev Kumar Kalra is stationed as the Police Observer.

Karimganj is going to polls in the second phase on April 18.

Agencies



World's shortest woman Jyoti Amge (25), shows her finger marked with indelible ink after casting vote during the first phase of general elections, at a polling station in Nagpur, on Thursday. PTI

Sudan army topples veteran leader Bashir

KHARTOUM, APR 11: Sudan's army ousted veteran president Omar al-Bashir Thursday, but protesters against his iron-fisted rule swiftly rejected a "coup" by the military and vowed to keep up their demonstrations.

In a sombre televised address, Defence Minister Awad Ibnouf announced "the toppling of the regime" and said Bashir had been detained in "a secure place", bringing an end to his three-decade rule.

73 pc polling in AP

● TDP, YSRC claim 3 deaths in poll violence

AMARAVATI, APR 11: An impressive turnout of over 73 per cent was recorded Thursday in the single phase assembly and Lok Sabha elections in Andhra Pradesh amid stray violence involving the ruling TDP and YSRC cadres that reportedly left three people dead.

Incidents of EVM damage and stone pelting marked the high octane polling that saw a large number out of the over 3.97 crore eligible voters turning up braving the scorching summer heat.

Polling was held Thursday simultaneously for 175 Assembly seats featuring 2,118 candidates and 25 Lok Sabha seats having 319 contestants.

The fate of incumbent chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu and main opposition YSR Congress chief Jagannathan Reddy, son of late chief minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy, was sealed as the curtains came down on the first ever general elections after bifurcation of the state to create Telangana in 2014.

Other contenders include the Congress, BJP and the Jana Sena of Pawan Kalyan, who has tied up with BSP.

Official sources said clashes between TDP and YSRC workers were reported in Guntur, Anantapuram, West Godavari, Prakasam, Kurnool and Kadapa districts, but did not specify deaths.

The polling was not affected in any place, they said. Police also did not confirm the election-related killings. Telugu Desam and YSR Congress issued statements reporting the deaths of their party members accusing each other of being responsible for the violence.

While about 73 per cent of polling was reported by closing time at 6 pm, authorities expect the final figure likely to cross 80 per cent.

Amid allegations of EMV malfunction, J&K records over 55% voter turnout

JAMMU, APRIL 11: Jammu and Kashmir Thursday recorded an overall turnout of over 55 per cent in the Jammu and Baramulla constituencies in the first phase of the Lok Sabha elections, even as there were protests over defective EVMs in some areas.

The two constituencies house over 33 lakh electorate.

The overall turnout was 55-56 per cent, with the Jammu Lok Sabha constituency recording 72.19 per cent polling and Baramulla registering 35.01 per cent, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Electoral Officer Shalindra Kumar told reporters here.

Polling was largely peaceful, Kumar said, adding that there was, however, one incident of firing in Palhalan of Baramulla and it was being looked into.

Congress candidate from Jammu, Raman Bhalla, who cast his vote in Jammu, had alleged large

scale EVM malfunction in Poonch and Mendhar belt of the constituency. He said people protested over the issue. Another Congress spokesman had claimed that in the EVMs, button number four of the Congress was not functioning

LS POLLS

and complaints were lodged with poll officials.

Former minister and senior Congress leader Shabir Khan had told reporters in Rajouri during the day that defective EVMs had been sent to remote and rural areas of Rajouri and Poonch. But nothing has been done to repair the machines, he had alleged.

61 PER CENT VOTING IN IN TELANGANA

Hyderabad: An estimated 61 per cent of voters cast their ballot Thursday in Lok Sabha elections

in Telangana, exercise passed off peacefully, officials said. All the 17 segments, including Nizamabad that saw over 170 farmers contesting demanding remunerative price for their produce, went to polls in the single phase and till 5 pm, 60.57 per cent voting was recorded.

While the ruling TRS has exuded confidence in doing well in the Parliamentary elections on the back of its sweep in the recent assembly elections, the Congress and BJP look to make a dent in the largely three-cornered contest.

53.06 PER CENT VOTER TURNOUT IN BIHAR

PATNA: An estimated 53.06 per cent voter turnout was recorded in four Lok Sabha constituencies of Bihar which went to the polls in the first phase on Thursday, a top election official said.

Altogether 70.52 lakh voters

were eligible to exercise their franchise in the four Lok Sabha seats which had 44 candidates in the fray.

EC ISSUES SHOW CAUSE NOTICE TO UP CM

NEW DELHI: The Election Commission Thursday issued a show cause notice to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for his "Ali" and "Bajrang Bali" remarks while addressing a rally in Meerut.

Finding him prima facie guilty of violating the model code of conduct, the commission asked him to respond by Friday evening.

Adityanath had compared the Lok Sabha elections to a contest between 'Ali', a revered figure in Islam, and Bajrang Bali, the Hindu god Hanuman. His statement came while referring to BSP chief Mayawati's speech at a rally in Deoband, where she urged Muslims to back the alliance.

Nearly 64 % turnout by 6 pm in UP constituencies

LUCKNOW, APR 11: About 64 per cent of voters exercised their franchise till 6 pm Thursday in eight Lok Sabha constituencies

LS POLLS

of western Uttar Pradesh that went to polls in the first phase. Estimating an average voter turnout of 63.69 per cent, the poll officials said the percentage is likely to increase a little as it was still an hour left for the voting.

Polling was brisk during morning hours, but it slowed down in afternoon, picking up again towards the evening with enthusiastic voters, mostly first-timers, lining up in



A woman after casting her vote at Mahuli, in Ghaziabad, on Thursday. PTI

several polling centres. Poll officials said till 6 pm Saharanpur recorded maximum voter turnout at 70.68 per cent, while the least turnout was reported for Ghaziabad Lok Sabha seat where it stood at 57.60 per cent.

Assange arrested in London after 7 years in Ecuador embassy

LONDON, APR 11: WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange was arrested by British police and carried out of the Ecuadorian embassy on Thursday after his South American hosts abruptly revoked his seven-year asylum, paving the way for his extradition to the United States.

The United States alleged Assange engaged in a 2010 conspiracy with Chelsea Manning, who served seven years in military prison for leaking classified data, and charged him with conspiracy to commit computer intrusion with a maximum penalty of five years.

An agitated, frail-looking Assange with white hair and a white beard was carried head first out of the embassy shortly after 900 GMT by at least seven men to a waiting police van.

"The whole House will welcome the news this morning that the Metropolitan Police have arrested Julian Assange, arrested for breach of bail after nearly seven years in the Ecuadorian embassy," Prime Minister Theresa May told parliament to cheers and cries of "Hear, hear!" from lawmakers.

Police said they arrested Assange, 47, after being invited into the embassy following the Ecuadorian government's withdrawal of asylum.

The arrests, after nearly seven years holed up in a few cramped rooms at the embassy, mark one of the most peculiar turns in a tumultuous life that

has transformed the Australian programmer into a rebel wanted by the United States.

Assange's supporters said Ecuador had betrayed him at the behest of

posing what supporters cast as abuse of power by modern states and for championing free speech. But to others, he is a dangerous rebel who has undermined U.S. security.



WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is seen after was arrested by British police outside Westminster Magistrates Court in London, on Thursday.

Washington, that the termination of his asylum was illegal and that they feared he would ultimately end up on trial in the United States.

To some, Assange is a hero for ex-

Assange gave a thumbs up in handcuffs as he was taken from a police station, and he later appeared in Westminster Magistrates' Court.

WikiLeaks angered Washington by

publishing hundreds of thousands of secret U.S. diplomatic cables that laid bare often highly critical U.S. appraisals of world leaders, from Russian President Vladimir Putin to members of the Saudi royal family.

Assange made international headlines in early 2010 when WikiLeaks published a classified U.S. military video showing a 2007 attack by Apache helicopters in Baghdad that killed a dozen people, including two Reuters news staff.

It was not immediately clear what specifically prompted Ecuador to end Assange's stay in the embassy, or the extent of the diplomacy that led to the arrest. The Kremlin said it hoped his rights would not be violated.

YEARS OF SOLITUDE

Assange in June 2012 took refuge in Ecuador's London embassy, behind the luxury department store Harrods, to avoid being extradited to Sweden, where authorities wanted to question him as part of a sexual assault investigation.

Sweden dropped that investigation in 2017, but Assange was arrested on Thursday for breaking the rules of his original bail in London.

Friends of Assange said the solitude he had experienced in the embassy had hurt him most.

"It was a miserable existence and I could see it was a strain on him, but a

strain he managed rather well," said Vaughan Smith, a friend who visited Assange. "The thing that was most difficult for Julian was the solitude."

"He was very tough, but the last year in particular was very difficult. He was constantly being surveilled and spied upon. There was no privacy for him."

WikiLeaks said Ecuador had illegally terminated his political asylum in violation of international law.

"Assange's critics may cheer, but this is a dark moment for press freedom," said Edward Snowden, a former U.S. National Security Agency contractor who fled to Moscow after revealing massive U.S. intelligence gathering.

Assange's relationship with his hosts collapsed after Ecuador accused him of leaking information about President Lenin Moreno's personal life.

Moreno said Assange's diplomatic asylum status had been cancelled for repeated violation of conventions. He said he had asked Britain to guarantee that Assange would not be extradited to any country where he might face torture or the death penalty.

"The British government has confirmed it in writing," Moreno said. "The asylum of Mr Assange is unsustainable and no longer viable."

UNITED STATES?

Due to a clerical error, a document filed by federal prosecutors in Virginia in an unrelated 2018 (Contd. on P-3)

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NAME CHANGE
I, No. 10245582Y Ex Hav Dhiresh Chandra Roy of Vill-Moligaon, PO-Baitamari of Dist. Bongaigaon, Assam changed my wife's name from "Rekha Rani Roy" to "Rekhamani Roy" vide affidavit dated 10/04/2019 before Notary, Bongaigaon. 61721

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DECLARATION
I, Mohammed Rana Borah, S/o Akhtar Hussain Borah, village: Nagaon, P.S. Baihata Chariali, Dist: Kamrup (Assam) declare that through an affidavit I have changed my name to Rana Borah. From now I will be known as Rana Borah. Rana Borah Village : Nagaon P.S. Baihata Chariali

AFFIDAVIT
I, Sarifa Begum, daughter of Sirajuddin Ahmed, resident of Sila, Changsari, Kamrup do declare by affidavit that subsequent to my marriage with Sanjib Sarma by court marriage on 26.06.2008, I have adopted husband's surname 'Sarma' and also changed my first name to 'Mamoni' instead of 'Sarifa'. Henceforth I shall be known as Mamoni Sarma for all intent and purpose. All my documents shall be corrected with this affidavit. 61720

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CHANGE OF NAME
I, ASHRAFUL ALOM son of Rafique Uddin Borbhuyan resident of Paschim Nibagan PS & Dist Hojai Assam 782445 do hereby change my name to ASHRAF BORBHUYAN by executing an affidavit before the Notary Nagaon Assam on 2nd April/2019.

VIT awarded No.1 position in ARIIA 2019



VELLORE, APR 10: VIT has added yet another feather to its cap by securing first rank among private institutions in the country in the Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA 2019) awarded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India. VIT Chancellor Dr. G. Viswanathan received the award from Honourable President of India Ram Nath Kovind during the award ceremony and release of National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) on April 8, 2019 at New Delhi. ARIIA award was given to ten Government institutions and five private institutions. In the NIRF ranking, in Engineering Institutions category VIT secured 18th rank including all the IITs,

NITs and leading universities. In the university ranking category, VIT bagged 19th rank among all universities in India. In order to promote innovations in Higher Education Institutions (HEI), MHRD, GoI came out with Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovative Achievements (ARIIA). The process of getting data from institutions, considering them and finalizing the institutions took several months and finally the ranks were declared by our Honourable President Mr. Ram Nath Kovind. The rank was declared in two categories, one is Government funded institutions and other is private funded institutions. The President also released the ranking of universities and colleges in the country under NIRF, stated a press release.

Honda starts pan-India deliveries of CB300R

GUWAHATI, APR 11: Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India commenced nationwide deliveries of the CB300R in Chandigarh, Jaipur, Delhi and Gurugram. Deliveries in other cities will be followed soon. Honda also introduced new accessories including 16 independent options and 4 customised kits - Premium, Protection, Standard and Sports. Developed as the ultimate Sports Roadster, CB300R is pure fun to ride and absolute joy to own. Minimal bodywork, lightweight, and a wide, flat handlebar all contribute to the CB300R's energetic character and overall manoeuvrability. The Honda CB300R is available in two exciting colours - Matte Axis Gray Metallic and Candy Chromosphere Red at a price of Rs 2.41 lacs. Bookings are open at the exclusive Wing World dealerships across India.

Rongali celebrations at Radisson Blu's Café B You



GUWAHATI, APR 11: Radisson Blu Hotel Guwahati is readying up for Rongali Bihu festival celebrations from April 15 to 17 at its Café B with a fusion of Assamese cuisine along with the world cuisine for the guests to enjoy. Elaborate multi-cuisine buffet with a special emphasis on Assamese cuisine, and a wide array of pithas and other Assamese rice delicacies, will be displayed accompanied by Assamese laal chhaa.

The main course would comprise of authentic Assamese preparations like Kumurar dia haahor mankho, lavara sobji, gahori lai haak, thekera tenga maach, tildia murgi, baingan and aloo pittika, mati mahor dali, amitar khar, otenga diadali and zoha chawal etc, stated a press release.

Markets tick higher in cautious trade as Lok Sabha polls begin

MUMBAI, APR 11: Benchmark equity indices ended with marginal gains Thursday, with investors largely remaining on the sidelines as voting began in the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls.

The 30-share BSE Sensex inched up 21.66 points, or 0.06 per cent, to close at 38,607.01. The broader NSE Nifty settled 12.40 points, or 0.11 per cent, higher at 11,596.70.

Traders said market mood was cautious as polling began in 91 constituencies spread across 18 states and two union territories in the first phase of the general elections.

Participants also awaited key earnings and macro data due Friday, they added.

Vedanta was the top loser in the Sensex pack, dropping 3.72 per cent. Axis Bank, Sun Pharma, Infosys, PowerGrid, ICICI Bank, TCS, HCL Tech, Tata Steel, Kotak Bank, HDFC, IndusInd Bank and Maruti too fell up to 1.46 per cent.

On the other hand, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Auto, Reliance

Industries, Tata Motors, SBI, HUL, NTPC, ONGC, ITC and Asian Paints rose up to 2.19 per cent.

"Market was range bound and finally settled with minor gains as investors



stayed cautious at the start of the initial phase of polling and remained watchful ahead of the announcement of CPI and IIP data tomorrow.

"Pick up in auto sales aided the sector to gain investors' attention. On the global front, economic growth remains a concern but Fed minutes reiterating the dovish view on rates will provide support to emerging markets like India," said Vinod Nair,

Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

Sectorally, BSE energy, telecom and oil and gas indices rose up to 1.11 per cent, while BSE metal, IT and tech dropped up to 1.18 per cent.

Meanwhile, foreign institutional investors (FIIs) purchased equity worth a net Rs 1,429.92 crore on Wednesday, while domestic institutional investors (DIIs) sold shares to the tune of Rs 461.29 crore, provisional data available with stock exchanges showed.

Asian markets were subdued on growth concerns, while trade tensions further dented risk appetite.

In Asia, Hong Kong's Hang Seng tumbled 0.93 per cent, while Shanghai Composite Index plunged 1.60 per cent. Japan's Nikkei rose 0.11 per cent and Korea's Kospi inched up 0.02 per cent.

In Europe, Frankfurt's DAX was up 0.42 per cent, Paris CAC 40 jumped 0.82 per cent and London's FTSE gained 0.24 per cent in early deals.

The oil benchmark Brent crude futures fell 0.44 per cent to USD 71.29 per barrel. Agencies

Titan Nebula gold watches launched

GUWAHATI, APR 11: Titan has announced a scintillating offer this auspicious season of prosperity under the Nebula range of solid 18k and 22k gold watches. With elegant designs, Nebula watches blend of the rich heritage of Indian jewellery making and the fine craftsmanship of watchmaking.



These watches bring to life Indian grandeur, celebrating the art and architecture of a resplendent past. Marking the auspicious season, Nebula has offered up to 20% off from April 5 to May 12. These highly design differentiated watches are available in plain gold as well as adorned with pearls, diamonds, rubies and other precious stones. The highlights for this season include the filigree, precious stones, calligraphy, nazakat (kundan polki) and Ashoka Maurya collections.

Bihu celebration with Kalyan Jewellers offer

GUWAHATI, APR 11: Kalyan Jewellers, one of India's largest and most preferred jewellery brands, has announced exciting offers as part of Rongali Bihu. Welcoming a prosperous New Year and the festivities of spring, Kalyan Jewellers is giving away 300 kg of gold in the form of free gold coins to its customers globally. The brand also runs a campaign which offers making charges starting from Rs 199.

The end of Bihu also marks the start of the wedding season, and this multi-offer campaign factors in the wedding shoppers as well. During this period, the making charges, also known as value additions, will start as low as Rs 199. Also, on every purchase of diamond or polki jewellery, worth Rs 50,000 or above Kalyan Jewellers is offering a 1 mg gold coin free and on purchases between Rs 25,000 a 400 mg gold coin free. In the case of solitaire, precious stones and uncut jewellery purchases above Rs

50,000, a 500mg free gold coin is on offer. Lucky shoppers are also eligible to win as many as 100 gold coins on purchase above Rs 10,000.

Speaking on the occasion, T.S. Kalyanaraman, CMD, Kalyan Jewellers, said, "Bihu, is a time for new beginnings and it is an auspicious time to make new purchases and exchange gifts with family. We understand the emotion and sentiment of our discerning customers linked with jewellery and festivals, and strive to be a part of their celebrations by providing them with an unmatched retail experience with the best of jewellery paired with the best of offers."

Customers can enjoy the benefits of this extended offer, until June 2019 across all Kalyan Jewellers outlets in the state. Muhurat, the wedding line as well as other in-house brands like Nimrah, Mudhra, Ziah, Rang, Anokhi, Glo etc will all be available at the nearest Kalyan store.

Narayana Superspecialty celebrates World Health Day

GUWAHATI, APR 11: Narayana Superspecialty Hospital Guwahati celebrated World Health day with 50 patients who underwent Joint Replacement and Major Ortho surgery at the institute. With the theme this year as "Joint Pain and Replacement Surgery", the hospital organized a free Orthopaedics Consultation and Investigation on the day.

Dr. Samarjit Khanikar (Ortho & Joint Replacement Surgeon) & Dr. Dickey Richard Marak (Ortho & Joint Replacement Surgeon), Dr.

Bappaditya Mukhopadhyaya (Medical Superintendent), Ajit Kr Bellamkonda, Santanu Bhattacharjee and Team of Marketing dept felicitated the patients with gamosa. The patients shared their gratitude towards the doctors and also their experience from the pain to the relief.

North East's first electric scooter Techo-Electra unveiled in Guwahati

GUWAHATI, APR 11: On the occasion of Rongali Bihu and 2nd anniversary of Next Digital Home we are happy to announce the launching of Northeast 1st electric Scooter Techo-Electra for the people of this region. The electric scooter was officially launched by Assamese film

actress Vaishali Saikia at Next Digital Home, near Rajdhani Nursery, zoo road, Ganeshguri in Guwahati. Speaking on the occasion chief guest actress Vaishali Saikia said this scooter will bring revolution amongst the two wheeler users. It was very much cost effective than the others and buyers can save thousands of rupees every month.

Speaking on the occasion Owner Mr. Narendra Soni said by launching this scooter we can protect the environment since these vehicles run on batteries, there are no fumes or burning of fuels in the engine. Electric scooters are not only cost effective but Eco-friendly too. With an electric scooter, we can improve air quality and decrease pollution. Electric scooters are becoming more and more popular every year.

Speaking on the occasion partner Mr.

Shankar Birla said with this electric scooter, we can save lot of money, which we spend on fuel every month. Riding on Electric scooter costs less than 10 paise per Km, while driving a fuel-Powered vehicle costs up to 1500 percent more. Additionally, fuel-powered vehicles



requires maintains, registration, insurance, license fees etc. But an electric scooter requires none of the above. Hence, saves thousands of rupees a year. Our Company Techo-Electra provide excellent comfort and safety. They combine stability, alarm system.

On an average a person minimum expenditure is almost Rs-2000/-per month for fuel. Where as an Electric scooter cost only 10 paise per Km and 70 kms in just 8 Rupees. For the vendors of different online companies who rides two wheelers for whole day, can have electric scooters to save their hard earned money. In 2017 around 9 lakh Electric vehicles sold out throughout the country and we are expecting estimated sales of 70 lakh units by 2022. Every year million people die due to Air pollution Co2 Emission (19.6 million thousands).

Topcem Cement completes 10 yrs of Rongali Bihu celebrations

GUWAHATI, APR 11: Topcem Cement, a leading cement brand of North East India. Over the years of success, growth and expansion, Topcem Cement has established themselves as responsible corporate citizen since its inception. Topcem Cement takes the pride for successfully continuing their decade long commitment of caring, sharing and bringing smiles on the faces of the elderly, old-age and differently-abled.

Like in previous years, this year also Topcem Cement plans to share the joy and happiness of Bihu festivities among the inmates and members of Assam Autism Foundation- Noonmati, Guwahati, Seneh Old Age Home- Kahilipara, Guwahati, Sishu Sarothi- Birubari, Guwahati, Amar Ghar- VIP Road (Magazine), Guwahati, Mother Old Age Home- Sijubari, Guwahati, Ashadeep Rehabilitation Centre- Boko, Santi Nivas- Nalbari. The pre- Bihu celebration started from 8th April 2019, with the first programme being organised in Assam Autism Foundation, Guwahati and will spread across 4 days till 12th April, 2019. In the institution the inmates took great enthusiasm and danced & swayed to the melodious tunes of Bihu. Traditional Bihu delicacies, pitha, laru etc. are also distributed.

Speaking on the event, Dr. Anil Kapur, President, Meghalaya Cements Ltd., said, "Rongali Bihu, the biggest festival of Assam celebrated by all communities to welcome the Spring Season and Topcem Cement has been always there to be part of the celebrations. He also said, "We shall continue to reach out to the less privileged and disadvantaged in the society and this activity has instilled a commitment within us to conduct such initiatives & activities more often. He Also said that reaching out and bringing a smile on the faces of the less privileged one has been an integral part of the Topcem Cement culture. Topcem Cement continues with its singular passion and commitment of Caring, Sharing and bringing smiles on the faces of all in the society".

The initiative is also an endeavour to recognize the role, effort and services of those people /voluntary organizations who have been playing the role of effective agents to bring forth the most desired social change and development by virtue of their direct contact and linkages.

The representatives from the organizations also shared their thoughts and experiences and thanked Topcem Cements for their kind gesture & for the voluntary contributions made.

Mock security drill at RBI HQ sends onlookers into a tizzy

MUMBAI, APR 11: Security agencies Thursday carried out a mock drill at the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) headquarters here, which involved a helicopter hovering over the 25-storey building in south Mumbai.

A video shot from the street below shows a helicopter coming over the RBI building's terrace and a few security men slithering down. As part of the mock drill, the security establishment created a "hostage situation" where people had to be evacuated from a particular floor in the RBI building, sources said.

The entire operation, involving multiple agencies, was planned to the last detail, they said. There are various kinds of security and fire drills that are conducted on a regular basis and this was a specific one which involved the use of helicopters. Agencies

Nokia 6.1 Plus, Nokia 2.1 and Nokia 1 now even more accessible than before

GUWAHATI, APR 11: HMD Global, INR 3,999. All prices are inclusive of the home of Nokia phones, today taxes.

announced that the much-loved smartphones – the Nokia 6.1 Plus (6/64 GB variant), the Nokia 2.1 and the Nokia 1 – have now been made even more accessible for fans in India. Nokia 6.1 Plus (6/64GB variant) will now be available at a recommended best buy price of INR 16,999. Consumers can buy a Nokia 2.1 at a recommended best buy price of INR 5,499; and Nokia 1 at a recommended best buy price of just

an all-screen design, expert craftsmanship and effortless performance expected from a Nokia smartphone. The smartphone was updated with Android 9 PieTM, the latest Android operating system, giving users access to the latest and

exclusive features from Google such as App Actions and Digital Wellbeing.

The supercharged Nokia 2.1 delivers long lasting entertainment with a bigger 5.5" HD screen and dual front facing stereo speakers. It gives you an incredible two-day battery life, so you can enjoy entertainment on the go. Its 5MP front-facing selfie snapper and 8MP rear camera with auto focus lets you capture the action wherever you are. Its sleek design with metallic-coloured detailing makes it stand out. The Nokia 2.1 also runs the latest Android 9 Pie.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

68 % polling in Assam in first phase

brother and state minister Keshab Mahanta also exercised their franchise in their respective home towns.

In Tezpur both Congress candidate MGVK Bhanu and his BJP rival and state minister Pallab Lochan Das arrived at the famed Mahabhairav Temple at the same time to offer prayers before going to the polling station to exercise their franchise.

They greeted each other, shook hands and even posed together for photographers before leaving the temple premises for their respective polling booths.

While the first phase of the three-phase voting for 14 Lok Sabha seats in Assam is taking place on Thursday, the second and third phases will happen on April 18 and 23, while the counting of votes will be on May 23 after completion of the entire seven-phase voting across the country.

Assange arrested in London after 7 years in Ecuador embassy

investigation revealed that Assange had secretly been indicted by U.S. authorities.

Prosecutors have acknowledged the authenticity of the document but have refused to confirm or deny that Assange has been criminally charged under U.S. federal law.

Britain said no man was above the law.

"Julian Assange is no hero, he has hidden from the truth for years and years," British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said.

"It's not so much Julian Assange being held hostage in the Ecuadorean embassy, it's actually Julian Assange holding the Ecuadorean embassy hostage in a situation that was absolutely intolerable for them."

A Swedish lawyer representing the alleged rape victim said she would push to have prosecutors reopen the investigation.

But Sven-Erik Alhem, a retired senior prosecutor and chairman of NGO Victim Support Sweden, said he thought that may be difficult.

"I'd think it would be fairly uphill to reopen the investigation, mainly because testimonies usually weaken with time and it's now been 10 years. On top of that, the statute of limitation is drawing near," he said.

Garo Hills records high turnout

NET STAFFER

TURA, APR 11: In a hard day of polling that began at 7 pm and continued till the last man completed his franchise after entering the booth within time, polling for the Tura Lok Sabha seat is expected to touch 80% of the over 7 lakh eligible for voting.

The last election in 2014 saw 78.10% votes polled.

While figures till the writing of this report are still hovering around the 70's, poll officials stated that the figure could go beyond 80% as more data filters in from remote areas. Poor network connectivity has not helped matters.

There were no incidents of violence reported from any of the 5 districts that comprise the Tura LS seat.

Returning Officer for the Tura LS seat stated that the figure had already touched 70% with reports from several remote areas still to come in due to poor connectivity. Meanwhile, preparations are currently underway to receive the sealed EVMs and VVPATs being brought in by the polling parties from different parts of Garo Hills.

The morning saw reports of a few EVM malfunctioning though these did not affect polling much as they were either rectified or replaced quickly. The malfunctions occurred when polling began this morning.

The highest voter turnout is expected from the South West Garo Hills district with polling already touching 77% in the district.

Polling in many places in the district was still underway till the writing of this report due to the high turnout this afternoon.

"In some polling stations like Chigatchakgre, Tarapara and others polling was taking place even after 4 pm," said the deputy commissioner, Ram Kumar.

West Garo Hills, which consists of the largest number of 11 assembly seats, also registered a high turnout. Early reports from Returning Officer Ram Singh mention 70% which could rise further once all polling teams return.

High voter turnouts were reported from several polling stations in the district including the likes of Pechon Memorial School and Rengsangre polling station under Rongram block where as many as 402 out of 522 voters had already cast their ballot by 1 pm.

In East Garo Hills district (3 constituencies), early reports state Songsak had crossed 60 percent, Rongjeng 55% and Williamnagar 52%.

"These are all tentative figures because we are yet to get the final percentage which will rise further," said deputy commissioner Swapnil Tembe from Williamnagar.

South Garo Hills district was the most difficult for polling reports to trickle in due to its remoteness and vast jungle region.

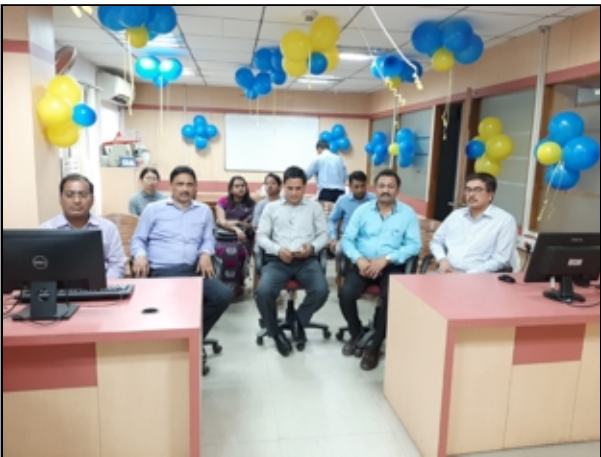
66 % voter turnout in Arunachal Pradesh

ITANAGAR, APR 11: An estimated 66 per cent of the voters in Arunachal Pradesh exercised their franchise on Thursday to elect members of the state Assembly and the two Lok Sabha MPs, an election official said.

Arunachal Pradesh has a total of 7,94,162 voters, including 4,01,601 women. Elections to the state Assembly and two Lok Sabha seats were held simultaneously.

Additional Chief Electoral Officer Kangki Darang said that according to reports available from the respective district election officers (DEOs) roughly 66 per cent voting was recorded in the state till 5 pm.

Allahabad Bank launches 'Navoday' to boost devpt



GUWAHATI, APR 11: For all-round development, Allahabad Bank has launched project 'Navoday' all over India. Under this project, complete transformation of the existing banking processes will be encompassed and active workforce shall be empowered with new skills to make the bank a viable and vibrant organisation. After implementation of "Navoday", branches will be repositioned as profit centres with primary focus on business development.

Under this project, processing centres will be introduced and specified branches will be designated for better business and quick business decision for benefit of customers at large. All branches of the bank will be mapped with the processing centres and specified branches, according to a press release.

The goal of this project is customer centric. Specified branches for Large Corpo-

rate, Mid Corporate, Agriculture and SME Finance will be opened all over India for catering to different sections of customers in the most effective manner. New products and services will be delivered through digitization. As part of this project at RMPC (Retail & MSME Processing Centre) was inaugurated at G.S Road Branch here yesterday. M. Subramanian, DGM & Zonal Head Guwahati inaugurated the centre by lighting the lamp. He informed that the bank has taken positive steps to revitalise the existing structure to give best service to the customers. Specified centres are being opened all over India for processing loan proposals at a faster rate and creating single point solution centre to customers. By this process, the time period for rendering service will be minimised and quality service will be rendered.

UNISO opens new store at Hub Mall in Guwahati



GUWAHATI, APR 11: UNISO opened a new store at Hub Mall on Gs Road here today, with fully stocked lifestyle and fashion products spread across various categories, thus making UNISO a unique shopping destination for modern India with a vision of "Contributing to a better Everyday Life".

The unique idea of bringing out something special and distinctive for style enthusiasts lead UNISO to increase its branches and reach out to the people across different parts of India. Launched first in the City of Garden, Bangalore, UNISO has been able to captivate and open its door to many hearts including Kolkata, Jodhpur, Jaipur and now Guwahati.

UNISO offers more than just a regular lifestyle and fashion products by representing its legacy of bringing out the uniqueness with appreciable quality for future trends, stated a press release.

77.6 per cent voting in Tripura LS polls

AGARTALA, APR 11: An estimated 77.6 per cent voter turnout was recorded in the election to the West Tripura Lok Sabha seat on Thursday, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer Suman Rakshit said.

The CPI(M) and Congress alleged rigging and intimidation of voters by the BJP, a charge denied by the saffron party.

"Till 5 pm voting percentage was 77.6 per cent. The polling percentage may rise as data from all booths are yet to reach," Rakshit told reporters.

Those voters who were in the queue in the polling booths at 5 pm, the official time for end of voting, would be able to exercise their franchise, the official said.

Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb, Leader of the opposition Manik Sarkar, sitting MP and CPI-M candidate for the West Tripura constituency Shankar Prasad Datta, Congress candidate Subal Bhowmick and BJP candidate Pratima Bhowmick exercised their franchise in the morning.

CPI-M general secretary, Sitaram Yechuri, who is in the state alleged that more than 460 booths out of the total 1679 were "rigged, voters were intimidated and forced to leave the booths and the agents of Left political parties were not allowed to enter inside the booths by the BJP workers".

Congress candidate Subal Bhowmick alleged that BJP workers "intimidated and threatened voters".

Agencies

Civil Defense training and demo held at USTM

● USTM to sign MoU with DG Civil Defense Assam

9TH MILE, Ri Bhoi (Meghalaya) APR 11: Defense officers from the Director General of Civil Defense Assam held a two-day civil defense training programme at the University of Science & Technology

handed over certificates of appreciation to the students. Collaboration has taken place between the Director General of Civil Defense Assam and USTM to train students on civil defense.



R.M. Singh, DG, Civil Defense of Assam and Mahbubul Hoque, Chancellor, USTM handing over certificates of appreciation to students at USTM on Wednesday.

Meghalaya (USTM) on 9th and 10th April where 90 students from the university were imparted training on disaster preparedness, vertical rope rescue, bandages, emergency rescue, drill etc.

At the end of the programme, yesterday, R.M. Singh, DG, Civil Defense of Assam and Mahbubul Hoque, Chancellor, USTM

at USTM.

Speaking on the occasion, Mahbubul Hoque, Chancellor, USTM said that theoretical course is not enough for disaster preparedness. He also stated that USTM and DG Civil Defense will jointly run six months and one-year courses on Civil Defense for students.

● Shillong registers 63.56% and Tura 75.60% turnout till 4 pm Over 67% votes polled in state

NET STAFFER

SHILLONG, APRIL 11: Over 67 per cent votes were polled in the Lok Sabha elections to the Shillong and Tura parliamentary seats which passed off peacefully amid tight security on Thursday.

"The elections have been largely peaceful and the poll percentage has been recorded at 67.03 per cent as per inputs received from 2,500 of 3617 polling stations," state's chief electoral officer (CEO) Fredrick Roy Kharkongor said soon after polling ended at 4 pm.

Kharkongor, however, said information is still being awaited from over 644 polling stations due to various reasons which include network connectivity even as he expressed hope that the voting percentage will go up after getting final figures.

In 2014, the overall voter turnout was registered at 68 per cent with over 10,77,948 of 15.67 lakh electorate who have cast their votes.

The CEO, however, said this year, 12,81,164 of 19.14 lakh voters have come out to exercise their franchise,

which is much higher in terms of absolute numbers compared to 2014 polls.

The voter turnout in the Shillong parliamentary constituency was registered at 63.56 per cent of 11,95,662 voters, which is much lesser com-

pared to the Tura parliamentary constituency at 75.60 per cent of 7,15,707 voters.

On the reported malfunctioning of the voting machines, Kharkongor informed that the cases were mainly due to VVPATs but the problem was effectively resolved and polling went off smoothly.

"We have 1.86 per cent of VVPAT malfunction which is much below the pan-India average at 3 per cent," he said. The CEO also congratulated the people of the state especially the persons with disabilities for coming out in large number to exercise their franchise.

"We would also like to compliment the "madata mitras" or poll volunteers who have gone an extra mile

to ensure priority voting is given to persons with disabilities, the aged and infirm during the polling hours," he said.

Altogether nine candidates are in the race for the Shillong and Tura parliamentary constituencies.

In Shillong, sitting Congress MP Vincent H Pala is seeking to retain the seat by contesting against five others — Jemino Mawthoh (UDP), Sanbor Shullai (BJP) and three Independents — THS Bonney, Samuel Hashah and Romeo Phira Rani.

However in Tura, there is a three-cornered contest with Congress leader Mukul Sangma seeking to oust the PA Sangma family which has held onto the seat for over four decades. He is contesting against former Tura MP Agatha K Sangma (NPP) and Rikman G Momin (BJP).

Both the seats are crucial for the ruling NPP-led Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA) to further strengthen their partnerships in the state.

Meanwhile, counting will held in 13 centres on May 23.

78.20 % turnout in Manipur till 4 pm

IMPHAL, APR 11: An estimated 78.20 per cent of the voters in Manipur exercised their franchise for the Outer Manipur Lok Sabha seat on Thursday

LS POLLS

till 4 pm, officials said.

The polling percentage will increase as those voters who were in the queue at 4 pm would be allowed to exercise their franchise.

Mizoram CEO Ashish Kundra on Thursday said the provisional figure on the voter turnout in the election to the lone LS seat and by-poll to the Aizawl West-I seat was 61.29 per cent at five pm.



PwDs after casting their votes in LS elections in Shillong, on Thursday.

78.76% voter turnout in Nagaland LS seat

KOIHMA, APR 11: An estimated 78.67 per cent voter turnout was recorded for the lone Lok Sabha seat in Nagaland and 84.3 per cent for the byelection to Aonglenden Assembly constituency on Thursday, top election official said.

The voting figures are provisional and the final turnout will be known on Friday, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Abhijit Sinha told a press conference here. The polling concluded without any incident of violence, except some complaints for malfunctioning of EVMs in around 35 polling stations which was later rectified and voting concluded peacefully, the CEO said. Nagaland has a total of 12,13,777 electorates, comprising of 5,98,503 women and 6,15,274 men voters, including 7415 service voters.

Four candidates INCs K L Chishi, NDDPs Tokheho Yephthomi, NPPs Hayithung Tungoe and Independent

Dr M M Thromwa Konyak are in the fray for the Lok Sabha seat.

The CEO said his office has taken up the issue of Deputy Chief Minister Y Patton wearing a BJP stole while casting vote at his native village at Rephyim in his home constituency 37-Tyui in Wokha district.

He also said that the Congress Party has demanded re-poll in the polling station as a video circulating in the social media has shown the Deputy CM getting inside the polling station and verifying several voters slip and casting the vote.

He said the appropriate action against the Deputy CM will be finalized only after Friday's scrutiny.

Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio cast his vote at Toupheha under his home constituency in Northern Angami-II. Opposition Leader T R Zeliang did it in Jalukie town of Peren district.

NDPP nominee Tokheho Yephthomi

exercised the franchise at Naharbari GPS polling station while INC nominee K L Chishi casted his vote at Atoizu in Zunheboto district.

The bypoll to Aonglenden Assembly segment is a straight contest between the Congress nominee Alemjongshi Longkumer and Sheringain Longkumer of ruling NDPP.

The bypoll was necessitated following the demise of ruling MLA Intikumzuk in September last year.

Aonglenden has a total of 12,436 electorates including 1,446 male and 6,290 female voters and it recorded a voter turnout of 84.3 per cent.

Asked about single member of a family casting vote for the entire family, which has been reported from several quarters, the CEO said there are no documentary evidence of such practices while there are no complaints of proxy voting and booth capturing too.

74 per cent voter turnout in Sikkim

GANGTOK, APR 11: An estimated 74 per cent of the voters in Sikkim have exercised their franchise on Thursday to elect members of the state Legislative Assembly as well as the lone Lok Sabha MP from the state, an official said.

A total of 4,32,306 voters comprising 2,20,305 males and 2,12,001 females were eligible to exercise their franchise on Thursday. Sikkim has a 32-member Assembly.

The polling percentage will go up as large number of voters who have queued up at polling stations till 5 pm would be allowed to vote, the CEO said.

There was no report of any violence from anywhere in the state during the polling of the state Assembly and the lone Lok Sabha seat which was held simultaneously, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Ravindra Telang told PTI.

Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling exercised his franchise at Namchi New Secondary School in South Sikkim's Namchi-Singhihyang assembly seat.

A total of 150 candidates are in fray for the 32 Assembly seats, while 11 candidates are contesting for the lone Lok Sabha seat in the state.

Polling was held in 567 polling stations spread across four districts in Sikkim. As many as 39 of 567 polling stations were manned by all-women personnel.

Chamling, who is seeking an eighth successive term as an MLA, is contesting from two assembly seats - Poklok-Kamrang and Namchi-Singhihyang.

Former Indian football captain Bhaichung Bhutia, the working president of the Hamro Sikkim party (HSP) has entered into fray from two assembly seats as well, including the Gangtok assembly constituency, reserved for the indigenous Bhutia-Lepcha communities.

Silence of Poll Bugle

Overnight, the political people's voices will change, especially in Meghalaya where the voting is over. Staunch rivals can now smile at each other in public. Incumbent chief minister Conrad Sangma and his predecessor Mukul Sangma can now shake hands in front of the people. Till the other day, they left no scope of firing salvos at each other. From name calling to character assassinations, all 'means' are applied by political leaders against the rivals.

They say everything is fair in love and war. Of course, there was no concept of election when the phrase was coined. Else, the phrase would have read, 'everything is fair in love and election', as full scale war like earlier days is almost over now. Besides no nation wants to jump into war by itself for the fear of being unpopular and isolated globally. But elections have become more intense. There are established propaganda machinery aka 'PR wings' of political parties that manufacture fake news and circulate through various channels in hundreds and thousands every day. Once a controversial comment is uttered by a rival politician, the PR group switches into war mode and start developing graphic and audiovisual 'contents' to draw maximum mileage out of the remark.

But all that changes once the election is over. The extreme expression of rivalry comes to a grinding halt. Rivals will be seen sharing the same dais. Almost none of the so-called vital election issues will be raised in the next assembly session as most election issues cannot be argued with papers. Elections are mostly fought on emotions and vague issues. One of them is the BJP's favourite allegation – no development took place during the 60-year-rule of the Congress government. The Congress' favourite allegation is BJP is a communal party and dangerous to the country's secular fabric. On the other hand the nation's oldest party stooped to the level of coining a campaign slogan 'chowkidar chor hain'. It is for sure that all these will come to nought once the elections are over. The harsh reality is that this drama will sustain as long as there is democracy, which is the so-far-best form of governance despite all its shortcomings.

STUDY

Menopause symptoms may increase risk of cardiovascular disease



A new study has revealed that severe menopausal symptoms such as sleep disturbance, hot flashes and depression, may increase the risk of developing cardiovascular disease (CVD). According to the study, menopause transition is marked with a number of severe health effects like depression which is typically seen as artery stiffening and endothelial dysfunction. The findings found that the frequency, but not severity, of hot flashes was specifically associated with greater arterial stiffening and reduced endothelial function. JoAnn Pinkerton, executive director at the North American Menopause Society in the US said, "Perimenopausal and early menopausal women are more vulnerable to increased risk of cardiovascular disease." Pinkerton added, "With fluctuating and then declining

estrogen during the menopause transition, it is important to monitor mood, blood pressure, lipids, blood sugars, and body composition because of the increased risk of abdominal fat. Healthy eating and exercise are encouraged, with individualised discussion about benefits and risks of hormone therapy." For the study, researchers examined 138 menopausal women for the association of mood, symptoms, and quality of life measures with the key markers of vascular aging, a major risk factor for the development of cardiovascular disease. In addition, across the stages of menopause, arterial stiffening and vascular dysfunction were associated with more frequent and severe menopause symptoms and a lower quality of life. No association, however, was found with depressive symptoms. The study was published in the journal Menopause.

Congress reforms pose threat to emerging middle class

By SRINIVASAN K. RANGACHARY

Over two decades of economic reforms, observers of Indian political economy had come to believe in an unwritten but empirically observable truth: that there existed a general consensus amongst major political parties in India about the trajectory of economic reforms, and of its core tenets. This unwritten agreement allowed core liberal market principles to take centre stage in framing economic policy irrespective of the party in power. It allowed investment decisions in an environment of diminishing political risk. It enabled the flywheel of economic growth to accelerate. Importantly, it enabled the creation of a new middle class, lifting hundreds of millions out of poverty faster than at any other time in Indian history. In 2019, this consensus has ended. Seldom has the schism between the economic policies of the two leading political parties become so vast. The BJP's economic and governance reforms are now firmly directed towards expanding the new middle class, a catchall term for the 'aspirational India' comprised of the former poor, but who have benefited deeply from India's GDP growth and now, say, drive scooters, buy refrigerators, use ACs etc, and whose children now participate in the new economy. In stark contrast, Congress' vision excludes this silent majority, except to speak contemptuously of them for complaining about possible higher tax rates.

Indeed, its manifesto all but restores the political sloganeering of Indira Gandhi's campaigns of 'garibi-hatao' through a redistributive approach straight from the 1970s: public spending funded by high taxes and fiscal deficits in order to mobilise the poor for temporary electoral gains. While the general trajectory of BJP's economic policies is now firmly oriented towards a liberal market economy, Congress' socialist approach- as evident from its recently released manifesto- now presents existential risks to the growing Indian economy. The manifesto is an important document in that it elaborates Congress President Rahul Gandhi's economic worldview for the first time with such clarity. (Every senior leader from the Congress has admitted that the party hasn't worked out any details yet, but that what the public should review is the messaging within the manifesto.)

The message is the problem. The Congress has proposed an economic pivot for the nation that involves

unprecedentedly large, unfunded, unconditional public spending welfare programmes for the poor of India, a rapidly diminishing section of the population, but one which is easier to cynically mobilise at the polling booths. Additionally, the manifesto contains flats surrounding increasing the ratio of education-spend/GDP and healthcare-spend/GDP; well-intentioned ideas, but whose declarative value is lost when the arithmetic impossibility of such spending is laid bare. When questioned by the media, Congress leaders first acknowledged insouciantly that higher taxes would be the norm if they come to power, then raced to deny it. As it is, no amount of incremental taxes could pay for the approximately \$150 billion of proposed additional annual expenditures. (Total direct collections in financial year 2018 were also, coincidentally, about \$150 billion; a 100 per cent tax-rate increase across-the-board would be required to fund their spending.)

Alternatively, the Congress would have to expand the central government's gross fiscal deficit to beyond 7.5 per cent of GDP. These are levels last seen, coincidentally, in 1991 when the comparable number was 7.61 per cent. India has been to this movie before: A rapidly depreciating rupee, rampant inflation, declining private investment... all of which would be accompanied by a general economic malaise that would expend two decades of hard-earned economic growth. It would be unwise to believe that the Indian economic revival of the last two decades is sufficiently robust to withstand the assault Gandhi is promising.

Economic reformation is less of a science and more of a complicated moral philosophy pregnant with human psychology, the study of motivations and incentives, and of choices and consequences. Politicians of all parties should be fearful of disrupting this equilibrium, except to do so with great care. The Congress' vision does just that. Violently, and strangely, cavalierly. It speaks of vast spending programmes that require no accountability or work-to-welfare path of its recipients, of an expansionary and intrusive government, of government jobs and of high-taxes... and when all is said and done, it speaks of the private sector in passing, and even then, only to smear it as crooked. In the end, what Gandhi has promised is the return of a socialist 'administrative state', along with its concomitant abuses. It is this approach by Indira Gandhi's Congress which kept

India in darkness until the late 1980s. It is to this where Rahul Gandhi's Congress will once again take India. (For those who are interested, I encourage them to read my op-ed: "In 2019, PM Modi Must Seek Mandate to Dismantle Congress' Administrative State".

In a speech to college students last week, BJP's most formidable strategist made a nuanced argument about the changing nature of Indian demographics, deftly revealing a thought process that will most likely underpin BJP's future approach to economic planning. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley mentioned three statistics: That in the next 10-12 odd years, India's GDP will approach \$10 trillion that the percentage of its population living below the poverty line will fall below 10 per cent and that India's middle classes will become more than 50 per cent of its population. These are astounding statistics for India, and need re-emphasising: within the next decade, India will become an upper middle-income country, and its middle class will be five times as large as its poor. A lack of focus on these numbers may be the reason for Congress' apparent cognitive dissonance: their political vocabulary in 2019 resembles that of the Indian politician of the 1970s, while the BJP in 2019 is beginning to speak the language that aspirational Indians are demanding. Given this trajectory, Congress risks psephological suicide and political irrelevancy were it to continue on the path they've laid out for themselves in their manifesto. The key focus of the incoming administration must be to build on the structural reforms of the last 20 years, and to outline an implementation plan for the next generation of reforms.

The next generation of reforms must go deeper and wider, think more ambitiously, and aim to prepare India for its arrival on the world stage as a \$10 trillion economy with a population in excess of 1.5 billion. Also, the next administration must build on the fiscal consolidation at the Centre and state level of the last five years so as to redefine the very role of government in the economy and end the 'administrative state' once and for all, the long-enduring curse of India. The 2019 elections will not merely be a fight between two political groupings. It has now become a clear struggle between two starkly opposing political and economic philosophies. The choice has seldom been clearer. INAV

The great game of 'Indo-Pacific'

By ANIRUDH PRAKASH

Discourse around the 'Indo-Pacific' has dominated the geopolitics of Asia in the past two years. Debates surrounding its semantics, the region's composition, expanse, nature of presence/role of stakeholders and, above all, the gradually unfolding 'Great Game' in the region have intensified. Yet, there is a substantive degree of uncertainty, even opacity, around this geopolitical construct: the Indo-Pacific. The two most obvious reasons for this are: the region finds itself at the crossroads of a potential power transition between a reigning superpower and a future one; and, a rapid change in the economic and politico-security imperatives of most countries in this region has led to great regional flux. The Indo-Pacific remains the region where the countries involved are still configuring, recalibrating, re-adjusting and re-orienting their strategies, politically as well as strategically.

Even as the US' traditional regional commitment in Asia is shrinking to accommodate China's growing leverage with other countries of the region, there is navigable space being created for middle powers, particularly Australia, France, Japan, India, the Philippines and the UK in the Indo-Pacific. This scramble between middle and great powers in the region with fast, adaptive power transitions, as also the closing of their comparative power gaps, has marked the Indo-Pacific as a competitive domain with two emerging power axes. On the one hand, there is a re-oriented Washington along with other interests-aligned countries like Australia, Japan and India- essentially forming the Quadrilateral Security Initiative or the Quad. On the other, is China's Belt and Road Initiative, which seeks to weave countries into a Euro-Asia infrastructure and aid architecture across the Indo-Pacific? However, the two axes, even though contrary to each other, have substantive overlaps, thereby diluting any hostility due to stark, opposing binaries. The BRI, with some 65 other countries that account collectively for over 30 per cent of global GDP, 62 per cent of the world's population, and 75 per cent of known energy reserves, and

Italy as the first G-7 country to endorse the plan, is way past the critical mass of consensus needed for its success. The Quad countries are struggling to find a common purpose, amidst economic and strategic overlaps with China as well as due to their individual regional interests.

This has led to the debate about the need for re-purposing the Quad. India has been seen, at least in the western discourse on the Indo-Pacific, as the 'weakest link' in the Quad. Although India's understanding of the Indo-Pacific seems conceptually inadequate to serve its desired interests and broader regional goals, there is a larger complexity involved to this reductionist understanding of India's position in the Indo-Pacific. India has carved out a distinctive space, with its emphasis on the principle of freedom of navigation and respect for the Law of the Sea, finding resonance with the central ideas of the Quad. However, India's increasingly tangible cooperation with the Quad nations, its reservations about a more formalised security structure in the region, while still balancing at home, and its desire to avoid being identified with any particular group with regional security implications on the international stage, is compounding complications in India's vision of the Indo-Pacific and its vision of the Quad. While India has engaged with the Quad states actively in the past couple of years, since the organisation's resurrection in 2017, it has also subtly emphasised on decoupling of the purpose of the Quad with its vision of the Indo-Pacific.

New Delhi has drawn conceptual and structural policy demarcations between the Quad and the Indo-Pacific through its actions, inhibitors and statements. In the aftermath of two important informal summits at Wuhan and Sochi with China and Russia respectively, India's enthusiasm towards the Quad appeared to have faded. As such, New Delhi seeks to place the Quad as one of the many multilateral frameworks operating in the Indo-Pacific region, not as the regionally consequential one. Enumerating its Indo-Pacific strategy in largely 'plurilateral

formats', India seeks to avoid restricting its Indo-Pacific strategy to the Quad at its helm, but also seeks to maintain its long-cherished principle of strategic autonomy by keeping its options open to engage with Russia in the region, as also by making conscious decisions not to provoke China. The Quad, comprising Australia, Japan, India and the US, was invoked with intentions of a collective security group in the Indo-Pacific, among whose purposes was to provide alternative models of regional growth and prevent China from violating regional rules with the same disregard that it practices in the South China Sea. As such, India's own position in the Quad and its intended interests in the Indo-Pacific appear contradictory to each other.

New Delhi should visualise the Indo-Pacific as a springboard to connect the ends of the two oceans across the maritime expanse of the Indo-Pacific. As New Delhi gradually seeks to bolster its presence in the region and take up the role of a net-security provider, it needs to shed its reluctance to move up to the Strait of Hormuz and beyond the Strait of Malacca. While the Quad can be converted into a vehicle to provide much-needed security architecture in the region, its effectiveness would depend on how much clarity India adds vis-a-vis its own regional mini-lateral engagements in the Indo-Pacific. New Delhi looks for the right balance in the Indo-Pacific between alignment and autonomy. While it demarcates the Quad from the Indo-Pacific, it risks losing a chance to create a strategic continuum, in favour of a fractured regional vision. A positive rationale to India's purpose in the Quad is the need to view the Indo-Pacific as a strategic continuum rather than an assemblage of sub-regionally divided goals, partnerships and alignments. The Quad provides India the opportunity to use its geographic centrality in the region to connect with the strategic ends on either side of the peninsula to enhance its security vision in the Indo-Pacific region, extending from the Gulf to the other side of the Strait of Malacca. INAV

SCIENCE

Here is all you wanted to know about the first ever image of a black hole

By NIRUJ MOHAN RAMANUJAM

The Event Horizon Telescope has released the first direct image of a black hole and its neighbourhood. This black hole lurks in the centre of a nearby galaxy called M87. This historic image shows a ring of light coming from the gas falling into the black hole. The black hole itself is shielded by the event horizon, a boundary from within which nothing can escape, and this is the dark interior in the image. Though astronomers have had solid evidence for the existence of massive black holes for many years, this historic moment marks the first time that it has been imaged.

What has the Event Horizon Telescope seen?

The Event Horizon Telescope, or EHT, has imaged the silhouette or shadow of the black hole at the centre of M87, a galaxy 55 million light years from us. To make this image, astronomers combined data from 8 different telescopes across the world in an experiment in April 2017. The data was taken at a frequency of 230 GHz, or a wavelength of 1.3 mm. Using this, astronomers have formed an image of the black hole for the first time. The event horizon of a black hole is the ultimate boundary. Nothing from within it can escape out. The ring of fire in the EHT image is light from the gas falling into the event horizon, whose shadow is the dark hole in the centre. The exact shape of the ring is due to the way the incredible gravity of the black hole bends the light around it, and the incredible speed at which the gas is travelling is why the ring is not uniform in brightness.

How big is the black hole at the centre of M87?

Almost all galaxies have black holes at their centres, and these can be a few million to a few billion times the mass of our Sun. Our Milky Way galaxy has a fairly small black hole about 4 million times as massive as our Sun. However, the black hole in M87 is a monster, and is 6500 million times the mass of the Sun. The size of its event horizon is about 20000 million km, which even bigger than our Solar System.

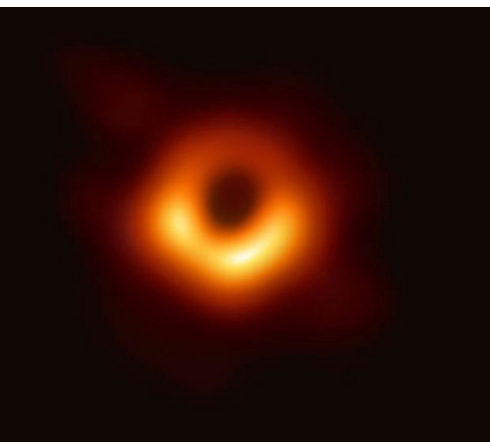
A black hole does not emit any light. Then how do astronomers 'see' it or its shadow?

Matter is attracted by the gravity of a black hole, but cannot fall into it easily. In fact, it forms a swirling disk around it, through which it spirals in to the black hole at extremely high speed. While doing so, matter gets heated to enormous temperatures, and this hot magnetised plasma is what emits the intense radiation that we see.

EHT has got an image of the radiation from this surrounding gas at a frequency of 230 GHz. However, the image is not as simple as a dark hole in front of a disk of radiating gas. Since the gravity near the black hole is immense, it can bend the path of the light rays from the surrounding magnetised plasma in peculiar ways. So even light from the gas behind the black hole bends enough to reach us. This bending of the light, called gravitational lensing, determines the final shape of the ring and the inner shadow that the EHT has imaged.

Why are black holes and their images so important?

Black holes can test physics theories such as the General Relativity theory of Einstein, which relates the motion of bodies due to gravity with the curvature of spacetime. It has passed every test in our Solar System (the accuracy of GPS in our phones is also a good test of the theory) as well as in other astronomical objects. All this is called the weak gravity case where the curvature of spacetime is small. What astronomers want to do is to test the theory in strong gravity, where the curvature is much higher, and see if the theory still works. The recent detection of gravitational waves from merging black holes is one such example. Imaging the shadow of super-massive black holes in galactic centres is another.



First image of a black hole, using Event Horizon Telescope observations of the center of the galaxy M87.

Why was it such a difficult experiment?

The EHT had to image M87 by collecting the radiation over a range of frequencies, and it did so by observing at a frequency of 230 GHz, which corresponds to a wavelength of 1.3 mm. This frequency is more than 2000 times higher than what is used by FM radio stations. This is a pretty special frequency where many factors align favourably. At much lower frequencies, the inner region of the centre of M87 becomes more opaque and less bright.

(Turn to Page 9)

Rahul must speak up on raids against Kamal Nath's aides: Irani



AMETHI, APR 11: Union minister Smriti Irani Thursday questioned the silence of Congress president Rahul Gandhi over the I-T raids against close aides of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath.

well-organised" racket of collection of unaccounted cash of about Rs 281 crore during raids against close aides of Nath.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said the department had also detected a trail of Rs 20 crore suspect cash allegedly being moved to the "headquarters of a major political party in Delhi" from the house of an important person who lives on Tughlaq Road.

Responding to a question on 'chowkidar ki chori' remark made by the Congress president, Irani told reporters here, "Why isn't Rahul Gandhi revealing who the gentleman from Madhya Pradesh is who transferred loot money to a person residing on Tughlaq Road?"

"What type of politics is the Congress practising wherein its leaders commit the sin of looting money meant for the welfare of pregnant women and poor children?" she added.

"Rahul Gandhi is still silent over the fact that from the residence of an aide of Kamal Nath, details about Rs

280 crore had emerged... Rahul's silence exposes his reality," she said further.

The Union minister said as far as the Lok Sabha elections were concerned, the people wanted a vision on the reconstruction of the country similar to what Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP has presented.

"Five years ago Narendra Modi was the prime ministerial candidate, and he served the country as its pradhan sevak for five years. We express our thanks to the party workers for the love and respect which Narendrabhai has got. We are confident that he will get the responsibility of country's pradhan sevak once again," Irani said.

She also reiterated that for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), it is "nation first, party next and self last" as she thanked the senior party workers who were tortured and jailed for protesting against the Congress, the youngsters who are strengthening the organisation party as well as the women. Agencies



BJP Nagpur parliamentary candidate Nitin Gadkari and his family members show their fingers marked with indelible ink after casting vote during the first phase of the general elections, in Nagpur, on Thursday. PTI

Thackeray, Munde in demand to campaign for Cong

MUMBAI, APR 11: MNS chief Raj Thackeray and NCP leader Dhnananjay Munde are among the non-Congress leaders, who are in demand from the grand old party to canvas for its candidates in Maharashtra, sources said.

Thackeray, known as a fiery orator, is likely to campaign for Maharashtra Congress chief Ashok Chavan and senior leader Sushilkumar Shinde in Nanded and Solapur constituencies respectively.

There is also a possibility of him campaigning for Congress candidates in some seats in Mumbai, they said.

These seats go to polls in second and fourth phases of the general polls. The MNS, which is not contesting the polls, is not a part of the grand alliance being led by the Congress and NCP against the BJP. According to the source, the Congress had also requested Munde, who is the Leader of the Opposition in Maharashtra Legislative Council, to campaign for its candidates in 10 seats- Nagpur, Gadchiroli, Wardha, Chandrapur and Yavatmal (phase 1); Nanded and Hingoli (phase 2); Jalna and Aurangabad (phase 3) and Dhule (phase 4).

The first phase polling is underway on Thursday. Of these seats, Munde has al-

ready campaigned in Yavatmal-Washim seat (Congress leader Manikrao Thakare is contesting from there), Hingoli, Wardha and Nanded, the sources said.

Munde will canvas for Shinde in Solapur on Friday, they added. "The problem the Congress is faced with is that it does not have leaders known for its oratory skills.

Thackeray has taken the Prime Minister head-on and is attracting people at his rallies," the sources said.

"Munde, too, is an effective orator. It is hoped rallies of the two leaders among others will help send across the message against the BJP effectively and consolidate votes," they added.

Former chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh, who died in 2012, is considered to be the last leader in Maharashtra Congress known for his oratory skills.

The second, third and fourth phase polling will be held on April 18, April 23 and April 29 respectively. The Congress and NCP are contesting the polls in Maharashtra, which has 48 Parliamentary seats, as part of the grand alliance. The Congress has fielded candidates on 25 seats, while the NCP is contesting 19 constituencies. The two parties have shared remaining four seats with allies. Agency ies

Opp scared and hence indulging in scaremongering: Modi

BHAGALPUR (BIHAR), APR 11: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday launched a scathing attack on the Congress-led opposition saying the "mahamilavati gang" is scared that if he comes to power again, their "shops" of corruption and dynastic politics will shut down.

Addressing an election rally here, Modi also said the opposition wants to strip the armed forces of their special powers, while the NDA government strives to give full liberty to jawans to deal with terrorists and Maoists.

Referring to the constituents of the "mahagathbandhan" (grand alliance) in Bihar as "mahamilavati (highly adulterated) gang", the prime minister claimed, "They fear that if Modi comes to power again, their shops of corruption, dynastic politics and venal defence deals will shut down."

"They are saying if Modi comes to power again, elections would be done away with. All constitutional bodies will be under threat. And reservations will be done away with,"

the prime minister said adding that "this chowkidar" has been making all efforts to strengthen the quota system introduced by Baba Saheb Ambedkar.

"Even the 10 per cent reservation for the economically weaker sections



has been introduced without curtailing the rights of any other social group. We found out a way to do so truthfully without causing any social tension," he said.

Modi alleged that the "divisive gang" is scared that it will be finished if Modi returns to power.

The country's armed forces require full liberty to deal with terrorists and naxals while the opposition parties want to strip the forces of their

special powers, he said.

"When they come to Bihar to seek your votes, make it a point to ask them whether they are with the country's brave jawans or with the terrorists," Modi said.

He said, "We say we will trace out and demolish terror hideouts in Jammu and Kashmir and put those, who are funded by Pakistan to carry out terrorist activities, behind bars. The Congress and its allies say they will hold talks. Can those singing the tunes of Pakistan, speaking its language and thriving on its finances be trusted with talks?"

Seeking to underscore that he discouraged VIP culture and cared for the poor, Modi said, "For 70 years, the poor of the country had spent their lives being in awe of the red beacon. This chowkidar of yours removed all the red beacons and got the houses of the poor illuminated".

Many politicians have built palaces and farmhouses but this government has constructed houses and brought cooking gas for the poor, he said. Agencies

Infiltrators are termites, will throw them out: Amit Shah

RAIGANJ (WB), APR 11: Referring to illegal



migrants from Bangladesh as "termites", BJP president Amit Shah Thursday said his party will throw them out after coming to power at the Centre for a second consecutive term.

Addressing a rally here, he alleged that the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal was only interested in appeasing minorities.

The BJP chief claimed that TMC stood for T u s h t i k a r a n , (appeasement), Mafia and Chit Funds.

"The illegal immigrants are like termites. They are eating the grain that should go to the poor, they are taking our jobs. The T of TMC stands for T u s h t i k a r a n , (appeasement), M for Mafia and C for Chitfunds," Shah said.

After coming to power, the BJP would find these termites and throw them out, he asserted, adding that citizenship would, however, be granted to every Hindu and Buddhist refugee.

Maintaining that the countdown to "corrupt" TMC government's downfall will begin on May 23, when the BJP bags 23 Lok Sabha seats from Bengal, Shah appealed to the voters to give the saffron party an opportunity to serve them. Agencies

Cont.. From Page 4

Here is all you wanted to know about the first ever image of a black hole

At higher frequencies, our own atmosphere blocks much of the radiation from coming in. 230 GHz seems just right. Telescopes at this frequency require incredibly hi-tech hardware, functioning at their limits of performance, including high precision atomic clocks and digital backend.

Is there a single Event Horizon Telescope?

A telescope large enough to image the shadow of the black hole in M87 would have to be as big as the Earth itself. Since that might be a bit difficult, astronomers chose the next best thing. Using a technique called interferometry, data from many telescopes spread across the Earth were combined in a special way. This enabled astronomers to make images that show detail on as fine a scale as would a single earth-sized telescope. However, this comes with the cost of enormous computation that requires months of processing on very powerful computers.

Why did the EHT not image the black hole in our own Galaxy?

The black hole in the centre of our Milky Way is about a 1000 times less massive than the one in M87, and hence also smaller by the same factor. However, it is only 26000 light years away from us and hence appears to be a bit bigger on the sky than the black hole in M87. EHT had also observed the Milky Way black hole, but since its brightness varies much more rapidly, even during the observation duration, the data processing to make the image is more difficult.

Why did the telescopes have to be so far apart?

The EHT experiment had eight telescopes operating together at sub-mm wavelengths. These were as far apart as Hawaii, mainland USA, Chile, Mexico and even the South Pole. All of them had to look at M87 together at the same time and record their data. The telescopes functioning together in this way are jointly called the Event Horizon Telescope.

The size of the ring seen by EHT is around 40 micro-arcsecond - which is the angle made by the thickness of a sheet of paper viewed edge-on from around 100 km away. The black hole in M87 is the largest in the local Universe and is therefore, a good bet. To image such a small region, we need a telescope that has an enormous magnification, so that details within the image can be captured well. In the technique used to combine data from different telescopes, the magnification is higher if the telescopes are farther apart. The farthest apart they can be, of course, is the size of the Earth itself. The magnification of the EHT image is enough for you to sit in New Delhi and read a book which is in Kanyakumari.

Why Indian telescopes were not part of EHT?

India does not have a telescope working in the sub-mm wavelengths. Though India has two of the world's largest radio telescopes (Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope near Pune and Ooty Radio Telescope), they operate at centimetre and metre wavelengths and will be completely blind at the shorter wavelengths of sub-mm. (India Science Wire)



UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi offers prayers ahead of filing nomination for Raebareli LS seat, in Raebareli, on Thursday. PTI

Urmila meets Pawar, seeks his guidance in LS polls

MUMBAI, APR 11: Ahead of polling in Mumbai for the Lok Sabha elections, Congress candidate Urmila Matondkar on Thursday met NCP chief Sharad Pawar at his residence here.

Matondkar, who is contesting from Mumbai-North Lok Sabha constituency, held discussions with Pawar for about half-an-hour over the current political scenario.

She exuded confidence that the Maratha strongman's guidance will set her on the path of victory. "The journey will be towards victory now after receiving guidance from a guru-like and towering personality, honourable Pawar Saheb. Many thanks to him for strengthening my fight," Matondkar tweeted in Marathi after the meeting. Agencies

Pak 'supporting' Modi, wants riots to spread in India: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI, APR 11: Pakistan and its Prime Minister Imran Khan are "supporting" Narendra Modi in the Lok Sabha polls as they want riots to spread in India, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal alleged Thursday.

The Aam Aadmi Party chief also alleged that what Pakistan could not do in 70 years, their "friend" Modi did it in five years -- that is damaging India's brotherhood.

His remarks on Twitter came after the BJP tweeted that it will ensure implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the country and will "remove every single infiltrator", except Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs. "Pakistan and (prime minister) Imran Khan want riots to spread in India. That is why Pakistan is openly supporting Modi in the upcoming polls," Kejriwal tweeted in Hindi. In an interview to a small group of foreign journalists, Imran Khan had said that he believes there may be a better chance of peace talks with India and settle the Kashmir issue if Prime Minister Modi's party BJP wins the general elections.

"Perhaps if the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party)....wins, some kind of settlement in Kashmir could be reached," the Pakistan premier had said. Polls in India are being held in seven phases for 543 Lok Sabha seats and the first phase was held Thursday. Agencies



I'm often disappointed with scripts which come my way: Jim Sarbh

MUMBAI, APR 11: Jim Sarbh, who has given critically-acclaimed performances in films such as *Neerja* and *Padmaavat*, says he feels overwhelmed with the kind of scripts coming his way.

The actor caught the audience's attention as the antagonist in his 2016 debut, *Neerja*. He has also starred in *Sanju* and was most recently seen in Amazon Prime Video's *Made in Heaven*.

"Films have always been my first love but because I kept getting cast in plays or because the school I went to didn't have film acting course. It just had theatre studies — I came from a theatrical tradition.

"I have spent the better part of my life reading some of the best plays in the world. I am spoilt. I

imagine that each script I get should be as good as those plays and I am often sorely disappointed," the actor said.

Having played some of the most iconic parts on stage, the longing to do good work in films has only increased, Sarbh, 31, says.

"I have had the opportunity of playing, in my opinion, some of the best characters ever written in a play, Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*, Jerry in *Zoo Story* and I can keep going. I have been lucky (in theatre)."

"(But) how will I get those parts (here)? I am waiting for an opportunity to sink my teeth into roles that are complicated, interesting as any of these."

The actor, however, found an opportunity where he could work and build his character while

working on *Made in Heaven*, created by filmmakers Zoya Akhtar and Reema Kagti.

He is garnering praise for his role of a rich Delhi industrialist, Adil Khanna, a complicated man, torn between his current love interest and wife.

"In the beginning, my character was a little underwritten as compared to others, which was quite refreshing actually. You could get an interpretation reading the character that 'oh he is just a bad guy' but I was more interested in playing him as a person who fell in love, again," Sarbh says.

Made in Heaven is directed by Zoya, Nitya Mehra, Alankrita Shrivastava and Prashant Nair.

The makers recently announced season two of the series. Agencies



An elderly woman shows her finger marked with indelible ink and voter identity card after casting vote during the first phase of the general elections, at a polling station in Jamui district of Bihar, on Thursday. PTI

S. Korea court overturns ban on abortion law

SEOUL, APR 11: South Korea's Constitutional Court on Thursday overturned a ban on abortion that has stood for more than 65 years, saying in a landmark ruling that current law unconstitutionally curbs women's rights.

In a statement, it said the ban, as well as a law making doctors liable to criminal charges for abortions done with the woman's consent, were both unconstitutional. "The law criminalizing a woman who undergoes abortion of her own will goes beyond the minimum needed to achieve the legislative purpose and limits the right of self-determination of the woman," it said in its ruling.

Seven of the nine justices ruled the law unconstitutional, and two dissented. It had survived a challenge in 2012 when the court split evenly, four to four, as one seat was vacant then. "I believe this ruling frees women from shackles," said Kim Su-jung, a lawyer representing the plaintiff, a doctor charged with conducting 69 illegal abortions.

The ruling reflects a trend towards decriminalizing abortion, as cases of criminal punishment have fallen in recent years. Just eight new cases of illegal abortion were prosecuted in 2017, down from 24 in 2016, judicial data show. Of 14 cases decided in lower courts in 2017, 10 postponed a ruling on condition that no crime be committed for a fixed time.

A survey by polling firm Realmeter last week showed more than 58 per-



A woman during a rally demanding the abolition of abortion law, in Seoul, on Thursday. AP/PTI

cent of South Korean respondents favor scrapping the ban, but a little over 30 percent wanted it retained.

Dueling demonstrations outside the courthouse highlighted persistent divisions in opinion. "How could you kill a baby that's growing inside you? Abortion is a murder," said Kim Yeong-ju, a 47-year-old mother of two who demonstrated in favor of the ban.

But the ruling helps ensure pregnancy is a personal choice, said Lee Ga-hyun, who joined a protest against the law after she saw a friend risk her life using illegal medication for an abortion. "I welcome today's ruling, which made it possible for women like me and my friend to live their lives freely," added Lee, 27.

LONGTIME BAN

The abortion ban dates from 1953, and has not changed materially since South Korea first adopted its criminal law after the 1950-1953 Korean War. Abortion numbers have been

dropping, with 49,764 estimated for women between 15 and 44 in 2017, down from 342,433 in 2005 and 168,738 in 2010, as birth control measures spread and the population of women in that age range falls, says the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs.

A 2017 petition urging the presidential Blue House to scrap the law against abortion and allow abortion medication drew more than 230,000 signatures. At the time, a senior government official said existing law was problematic because it only held women accountable for abortion.

President Moon Jae-in, a liberal, has not stated clearly if he supports the law, but has called for more discussions to build consensus. The law prescribes jail for up to a year or fines of up to 2 mn won (\$1,756) for women who undergo abortion. It also sets terms of up to two years in jail and seven-year license suspensions for medical professionals, including doctors, who provide abortions at the woman's request. Exemptions now allow abortions within 24 weeks of pregnancy for medical reasons, such as a hereditary disease or grave danger to the mother, or following rape.

In all those cases, the law requires the spouse's permission.

"If the case does not fall under an exemption, the law forces the pregnant woman to maintain the pregnancy completely and uniformly, without exception," the court said. Agencies



Policemen patrol the Mother Teresa Tirana International Airport, on Thursday. The Albanian Defense Ministry, on Wednesday sent in the military to secure the country's only international airport after heavily armed men stole a large sum of cash as it was loaded onto a passenger plane. One robber was shot dead by police but the others escaped with the money, reported by Albanian media to be as much as 10 million euros (\$11.3 million). AP/PTI

Fire at Bangkok shopping mall kills two

BANGKOK, APR 11: At least two people died and 16 were injured when fire broke out on Wednesday at a shopping centre in Bangkok, forcing some people to jump from the burning building.

Earlier, authorities had said three people were

killed. The Central World Complex, which includes a shopping mall, offices, and a hotel, was evacuated, said operator Central Pattana. "The building will be closed until it is safe," Bangkok Governor Aswin Kwanmuang told reporters at the scene of the fire. "We

have to see the impact on the structure and the police will need to go in to investigate." Local media showed video of one person jumping from smoked-filled window to escape the fire. "I saw smoke coming out from the building and two people jumped," Tha-

nusit Kidtham, an eyewitness, told Reuters. The blaze started in the parking garage of the complex, police said. The cause was not yet known. The fire came in an area popular with tourists, just days before the Songkran holiday on April 13 to 15. Agencies

Hindu sisters not forcibly converted, allowed to live with husbands: Pak court

ISLAMABAD, APR 11: A Pakistani high court on Thursday declared that the two Hindu teenage sisters were not forcibly converted from Hinduism to Islam, and permitted them to live with their spouses, according to a media report.

The two girls, Raveena (13) and Reena (15), and their spouses petitioned the Islamabad High Court on March 25 against alleged harassment by police days after their father and brother alleged that the girls were underage, abducted, forced into changing their religion, and then married off to Muslim men. In their plea, the girls claimed that they belong to a Hindu family of Ghotki, Sindh but converted willfully as they were impressed by Islamic teaching, Dawn reported. The counsel for the girls' parents, however, asserted that the case pertained to forced conversion. Chief Justice Athar Minallah constituted a five-member commission to probe whether the conversion of the Hindu sisters to Islam was forced or otherwise. The commission comprising Human Rights Minister Shireen Mazari, prominent Muslim scholar Mufti Taqi Usmani, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan Chairperson Dr Mehdi Hasan, National Commission on the Status of Women Chairperson Khawar Mumtaz and veteran journalist and human rights activist I.A. Rehman probed the matter and concluded that it was not a forced conversion, the report said.

The secretary interior, Azam Suleman, apprised the high court about the findings of the commission, and told the court that as per the commission's opinion, it was a facilitated conversion, the report said. Rehman pointed out in court that "there is no law in Pakistan against forced conversions" and sought a court decree in this regard. Minallah remarked that the case of the Ghotki sisters was a simple one and would have been decided in a day or so, but a commission comprising eminent professionals and scholars was constituted keeping in view the sensitivity of the case since "the court wanted to ensure this was not a forced conversion". Regarding the issue of forced conversions, the court sought the commission's recommendations within four weeks and adjourned the case until May 14. The teenage sisters were allegedly kidnapped by a group of "influential" men from their home in Ghotki district in Sindh on the eve of Holi. Soon after the kidnapping, a video went viral in which a cleric was purportedly shown solemnising the Nikah (marriage) of the two girls, triggering a nationwide outrage. Agencies



A woman walks on planks over a flooded street in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Wednesday. Heavy rains killed at least 10 people and left a trail of destruction in Rio on Tuesday, raising questions about the city's preparedness to deal with recurring extreme weather. AP/PTI

Prince Harry and Meghan to keep baby plans private



LONDON, APR 11: Prince Harry and Meghan have decided to keep the plans around the arrival of their first child private, Buckingham Palace said on Thursday.

Harry and Meghan, whose official titles are the duke and duchess of Sussex, expect the birth of their first child in the coming weeks.

"The Duke and Duchess of Sussex are very grateful for the goodwill they have received from people throughout the United Kingdom and around the world as they prepare to welcome their baby," they said in a statement.

"Their Royal Highnesses have taken a personal decision to keep the plans around the arrival of their baby private," the palace said.

"The Duke and Duchess look forward to sharing the exciting news with everyone once they have had an opportunity to celebrate privately as a new family." Agencies

US puts 37 Chinese companies and schools on red-flag 'unverified' list

WASHINGTON, APR 11: The US Commerce Department said on Wednesday that it is adding 37 Chinese companies and schools to a red-flag list of "unverified" entities that US companies should treat with caution, according to a notice in the Federal Register.

The list, which takes effect on Thursday, also includes six organizations in Hong Kong, four in the United Arab Emirates, two in Malaysia and one in Indonesia.

One company on the list is the Aisin Nantong Technical Center, a Chinese subsidiary of a Japanese auto parts manufacturer. Another is Beijing Bayi

Space LCD Materials Technology Co Ltd, which has received patents for high-end screen technology.

Several other of the companies named specialize in precision optics, electronics, machine tools or aviation. The listing means that the US companies will treat the organizations with caution, said Kevin Wolf, a former assistant secretary of commerce for export administration. China's commerce ministry, when asked on Thursday about its response, said it opposed abuses of national security and export control rules, adding the US action has smeared Chinese firms and

disrupted normal trade flow. The US government should correct its "wrong" behavior by removing the relevant Chinese companies from the list as soon as possible, ministry spokesman Gao Feng told reporters in a regular briefing in Beijing.

Being put on an "unverified" list means that US suppliers to the unverified companies and schools can no longer use license exceptions to, for example, sell products to repair goods that were sold previously but instead will have to get a new license, said Wolf, now at the law firm Akin Gump. Agencies



A Venezuelan holds a poster with a message that reads in Spanish: "Protesting because; No electricity, No water, No food," during a demonstration against President Nicolás Maduro, in Caracas, on Wednesday. Since a massive power failure struck on March 7, the nation has experienced near daily blackouts and a breakdown in critical services such as running water and public transportation. AP/PTI

New species of ancient human discovered in Philippines

TOKYO, Japan, APR 11: The human family tree has acquired a new branch with the unearthing of a previously unknown species of human that lived on an island in today's Philippines some 50,000 years ago.

The species, dubbed Homo luzonensis after the island of Luzon where its remains were found, is not a direct ancestor of modern day humans, but rather a distant ancient relative.

But the discovery, published in the journal Nature on Thursday, adds to a growing body of evidence that human evolution is not as linear as was once thought.

It also raises questions, including how the species arrived on the island and who its ancestors were.

The "remarkable discovery... will no doubt ignite plenty of scientific debate over the coming weeks, months and years", said Matthew Tocheri, associate professor of anthropology at Canada's Lakehead University, in a review commissioned by Nature.

The researchers from France, the Philippines and Australia found the remains in the Callo Cave, where a

bone dating back 67,000 years was discovered in 2007.

It was not initially clear which type of early human that bone came from, but more recently the researchers discovered seven teeth and five different bones at the site, dating back between 50,000 and 67,000 years.

With more evidence to examine, from at least three individuals, they were able to build the case that the remains came from a previously unknown type of human.

"From the beginning, we realised the unusual characteristics of these fossils," Florent Detroit, who co-led the study, told AFP at a press briefing.

"We completed the comparisons and analyses, and it confirmed that this was something special, unlike any previously described species of hominins in the homo genus," added



The fossil teeth of the newly discovered species Homo Luzonensis compared to that of Erectus Sapiens

etroit, a palaeoanthropologist at France's Musee de l'Homme.

A NEW SPECIES

In particular, the teeth they found had a surprising combination of elements from different early humans.

"It's a mixture that we haven't seen in other species," said Detroit.

"And that was what told us, among

other things, that this doesn't correspond to what we know today, so we have described a new species."

But the discovery raises many questions, including how Homo luzonensis got to the island, which researchers say has always a required "a substantial sea crossing" to reach from the mainland.

Researchers are also as yet unsure which of the more ancient human precursors recorded in the fossil record in Africa Homo luzonensis may be descended from.

For a long time, theories of evolution centred around the idea that an early species called Homo erectus began dispersing from Africa between 1.5 million to two million years ago.

Under that theory, other early hu-

mans stayed put in Africa, where they eventually died out.

But the theory has been challenged by discoveries in recent years of species that do not appear to be descended from Homo erectus, including Homo floresiensis, the so-called "hobbit" found in 2004 on an Indonesian island.

The discovery of Homo luzonensis "provides yet more evidence that hints that H. erectus might not have been the only globe-trotting early hominin", wrote Tocheri.

A WHOLE LOT MORE INTERESTING

Intriguingly, both of the island-dwelling early humans share some characteristics with very old human species recorded in Africa.

In particular, the newly discovered luzonensis has a foot bone that is unlike any of its known human contemporaries but closely resembles those of a human species known to have existed in Africa around two to three million years earlier.

Luzonensis also has curved finger and toe bones, suggesting climbing

may have been an important part of its behaviour — something associated more with much earlier human species.

But Detroit said for now researchers believe luzonensis most likely walked upright rather than lived in trees.

The remains also suggest that the species was small, perhaps standing less than four feet tall.

One theory holds that the peculiar features of luzonensis and its island cousin floresiensis could be the result of their habitat, with the unique and isolated surroundings prompting them to evolve characteristics reminiscent of their ancient forebears.

But definitive evidence on that front remains to be collected, and so far efforts to extract DNA from the new specimens has been unsuccessful.

"One thing can be said for certain," wrote Tocheri.

"Our picture of hominin evolution in Asia... just got even messier, more complicated and a whole lot more interesting." Agencies

Russell-Rabada battle on cards at Eden

KOLKATA, APR 11: Swashbuckling Andre Russell's big-hitting prowess will be pitted against Kagiso Rabada's inch-perfect yorkers for the second time when Kolkata Kight Riders face Delhi Capitals in a return-leg fixture of the IPL here Friday.

Away from the match, the spotlight will also fall on where former KKR and India captain Sourav Ganguly sits during the match. Ganguly will be a 'visitor' at his 'home' ground of Eden Gardens as he is currently donning the advisor's hat in the Delhi franchise, which has drawn 'conflict-of-interest' charges against him.

Second in the IPL table with eight points from six matches, KKR's season so far has been a Russell show with the Jamaican amassing 257 runs from five innings, out of which 150 have come in sixes alone.

His average has been 128.50 while the strike rate is a mind-boggling 212.39, something that has left the opposition clueless on how to stop him.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni did it with perfect execution by stranding Dre-Russ (as Russell is known to KKR fans) with his spin-heavy attack en route to handing KKR a crushing seven-wicket defeat in Chennai in their last match.

KKR's second defeat this season has been at the hands of Delhi Capitals in a dramatic Super Over finish at Kotla with Rabada win-

ning the battle against Russell.

Tasked to defend 11 runs in the Super Over, Rabada was smashed for a four by Russell in the first ball, but returned strongly to uproot the middle stump with an inch-perfect yorker, something Ganguly has termed as the "ball of the tournament".

While KKR will look to avenge their first leg defeat, Delhi, who have six points from as

many matches, will be looking for their fourth win of the league to return to top-five.

With Delhi Capitals boasting a world class pace attack spearheaded by the 23-year-old South African Rabada, a few insiders at Cricket Association of Bengal have claimed that its president Ganguly may have a 'say' in the pitch which could assist pacers.

"You will know about the nature of the wicket on the day of the match. Whatever it is, whichever team plays well will win, it's simple," Ganguly has said, why replying on the allegations with a straight bat, even as the Eden Gardens is set to be divided in

loyalty. The Teams (From): Kolkata Knight Riders: Dinesh Karthik (capt), Robin Uthappa, Chris Lynn, Shubman Gill, Andre Russell, Carlos Brathwaite, Sunil Narine, Piyush Chawla, Kuldeep Yadav, Nikhil Naik, Joe Denly, Shrikant Mundhe, Nitish Rana, Sandeep Warrier, Prasidh Krishna, Lockie Ferguson, Harry Gurney, KC Cariappa and Yarra Prithviraj.

Delhi Capitals: Shreyas Iyer(capt), Prithvi Shaw, Shikhar Dhawan, Rishabh Pant(wk), Colin Ingram, Keemo Paul, Axar Patel, Rahul Tewatia, Amit Mishra, Kagiso Rabada, Ishant Sharma, Hanuma Vihari, Anush Bains, Harshal Patel, Manjot Kalra, Chris Morris, Sherfane Rutherford, Jalaj Saxena, Sandeep Lamichhane, Trent Boult, Avesh Khan, Nathu Singh, Bandaru Ayyappa, Colin Munro.

Match starts at 8pm.

IPL preview: KKR vs DELHI CAPITALS



Andre Russell

While the KKR fans may be anticipating a Russell-mania at the Eden, the nature of the wicket will also play an important role in Friday's match.

Smith, Warner got away with murder: Ambrose

LONDON, APR 11: The Australian duo of Steve Smith and David Warner "got away with murder" and should have been banned for two years for their roles in the ball-tempering scandal, feels West Indies pace legend Curtly Ambrose.

Africa at Cape Town in March last year.

The duo are currently playing in the Indian Premier League after their bans ended on March 29.

Smith and Warner are trying to get their place back in the Australian squad for this year's World Cup and Ashes tour.

"When you break the law like that you should be punished," Ambrose, only one of the 15 bowlers in history to record more than 400 Test wickets, told Fox Sports.

"I honestly thought they got away with murder. A year was a little bit (lenient). I would have said two years just to send a message because it was stupid really."

The 55-year-old from Antigua, however, hoped that the duo can make it to the Australian team for the World Cup.

"I believe they will never do it again," he said.

"I just hope that all of Australia supports them and I hope that they go to the World Cup because they'll make the team stronger."

Agencies



Former Australian captain Steve Smith received a year's ban for orchestrating the ball-tempering scandal during the Test series against South Africa last March.

Former captain Smith and his deputy Warner were handed a one-year ban by Cricket Australia for their role in trying to rough up one side of the ball with sandpaper during the third Test against South

India beat Malaysia to win series

KUALA LUMPUR, APR 11: The Indian women's hockey team remained unbeaten through a five-match bilateral series as they clinched the

in the 35th minute that helped India win the match which was coupled with good defending that ensured they held on to the narrow lead till



Indian hockey team player Navneet in action against Malaysia during their match in Kuala Lumpur, on Thursday. India won the match to win the bilateral series. PTI

fifth match with a 1-0 win against Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday.

It was Navjot Kaur's fine field goal

the end of regulation time.

India did well to create scoring opportunities with substantial circle entries but could not convert enough

WOMEN'S HOCKEY

goals while Penalty Corner conversion remained a concern.

"We need to work on converting goals," stated India's chief coach Sjoerd Marijne who was not very pleased with the margin the team defeated Malaysia.

"I am happy with the number of times we entered the opponent's circle. We created enough opportunities with shots and PCs but we have to keep working on converting in small space," he said.

Speaking about the tour which saw India win 3-0, 5-0, draw 4-4 and win the last two matches 1-0 respectively in the 5 match series, Marijne said, "This tour gave us more insight on how to play against a very defensive team like Malaysia. Also it was good that some of our young players experienced what it takes at international level and this will really help us to create depth in the squad."

Agencies

Sindhu, Saina, Srikanth enter qtrs; Kashyap loses to 4th seed Chinese

SINGAPORE, APR 11: P V Sindhu had it easy but Saina Nehwal was tested before making it to the women's



PV Sindhu had to play catch-up in the 2nd game before sealing the issue.

singles quarter-finals of the US\$355,000 Singapore Open in Singapore on Thursday.

The fourth-seeded Sindhu, a Rio Games silver medalist, took 39 minutes to get the better of World No 22 Mia Blichfeldt 21-13, 21-19, her second straight win over the Danish shuttler.

Sixth-seeded Saina, however, had to work hard in her bid to avenge a

Malaysia Open first-round loss to Pornpawee Chochuwong before pulling off a thrilling 21-16, 18-21, 21-19 win over the Thai shuttler in the second round.

The London Olympic bronze medallist will next square off against second seeded Japanese Nozomi Okuhara. While Saina was plotting the downfall of Chochuwong, her husband and fellow shuttler Parupalli Kashyap was locked in a fierce battle with reigning Olympic champion, Chen Long of China.

Sixth seed Kidambi Srikanth survived a scare in the second game before overcoming Denmark's Hans-Kristian Solberg Vittinghus 21-12, 23-21 to set up a meeting with the winner of the match between top seed Kento Momota of Japan and India's H S Prannoy.

Kashyap, a 2014 Commonwealth Games champion, stretched Chen to three games before narrowly losing 9-21, 21-15, 16-21 to the fourth seeded Chinese, who had reached the finals at Malaysia Open last year.

Sameer Verma, however, continued his impressive run, beating China's Lu Guangzu 21-15, 21-18 to set up a clash with either second seeded Taipei player Chou Tien Chen or Denmark's Jan O Jorgensen.

SINGAPORE OPEN

Pollard not giving up on West Indies World Cup hopes

MUMBAI, APR 11: Kieron Pollard last turned out for West Indies in a one-day international in 2016 but the burly all-rounder has not given up hope of making the squad for this year's World Cup.

Contractual disputes between the players and Cricket West Indies have weakened the team for several years now with the frosty relations famously culminating in the 2014 tour of India being called off midway through the series.

There have been signs of a thaw recently, however, with a new leadership

India last year.

"I am a cricketer, I am 31 years of age and I have lot of cricket left in me," Pollard told reporters after smashing 83 off 31 balls against Kings XI Punjab to lead the Mumbai Indians to a thrilling last-ball win on Wednesday.

"Every day I get the opportunity to play, I want to do my best. There has been a lot of turmoil in West Indies cricket over the last couple of years. But we have seen in the last couple of weeks there's a change.

"Pollard was one of the guys blacklisted. The most I can do every time I step on the cricket field is try to put runs on the board. There's people there who have the job to select and whatever and we'll see how that goes.

"As I said, I'm 31, Chris Gayle is still playing, he's 39, and he's still whacking it all around."

Leading Mumbai in the absence of injured regular captain Rohit Sharma, Pollard helped his side to an unlikely win chasing Punjab's 197-4, which was built on an unbeaten 100 from KL Rahul and a typically punishing 63 from Gayle.

Pollard belted 10 sixes and three fours in his knock for Mumbai's fourth win in six matches this season, after they needed 104 off the last eight overs.

West Indies have proved in this year's IPL that they have no shortage of short-form matchwinners at their disposal in the likes of Pollard, Gayle, Sunil Narine and Andre Russell.

The twice world champions could therefore be a tough prospect for any opponent at the May 30-July 14 World Cup in England and Wales.

"We know what we can do and I think Chris batted superbly," Pollard said.

Agencies



team in place at the board and former captain Chris Gayle returning to the ODI side for the recent series against England in a big boost ahead of the World Cup.

Pollard, like Gayle famed for his six-hitting prowess, returned to the West Indies fold after a year out to join the Twenty20 team for the three-match series in

Goswami credits IPL experience for growth in life

MUMBAI, APR 11: Shreevats Goswami is yet to get a game in this season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) but the Sunrisers Hyderabad wicket-keeper feels the overall experience in the cash-rich league has helped him to grow as a person.

The 29-year-old cricketer made his IPL debut over a decade ago.

"The (overall IPL) experience has been amazing. Apart from cricketing experience, it has made me grow as a person.

Speaking to legends of the game, being involved in the team meeting, it has made me grow in life.

"It has helped me to have a right discipline and all those things have helped me," Goswami said when quizzed about his experience in the cash-rich T20 league.

"Obviously rubbing shoulders with the legends of the game has helped develop a kind of friendship which will last long (and) so a combination of all of these has helped me," elaborated the Kolkata-born left-handed batsman.

Agencies

Paralympian Deepa honoured by New Zealand

NEW DELHI, APR 11: Rio Paralympics silver medallist Deepa Malik

was on Thursday became the recipient of the New Zealand Prime Minister's Sir Edmund Hillary Fellowship for 2019 in recognition of her "inspiring achievements".

The 48-year-old Deepa, who won the silver medal in shot put F53 event in Rio in 2016, will work to promote sporting, cultural, as well as people-to-people relationship be-

tween India and New Zealand.

Athletes in F53 category can do only seated throws and they have full muscle power on their shoulder, elbow and wrist in the throwing arm.

"We are very pleased to announce that the New Zealand Prime Minister's Sir Edmund Hillary Fellowship for 2019 has been awarded to Indian Paralympic athlete Deepa Malik. The fellowship, awarded by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, aims to

strengthen the ties between India and New Zealand," a New Zealand High Commission release said.

As a Hillary Fellow, Deepa will travel to New Zealand and meet Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, undertake a series of visits to Paralympic sporting organisations and engage with Kiwi athletes, students and media as well as the significant Indian community there.

Agencies

Two-In-One CROSSWORD

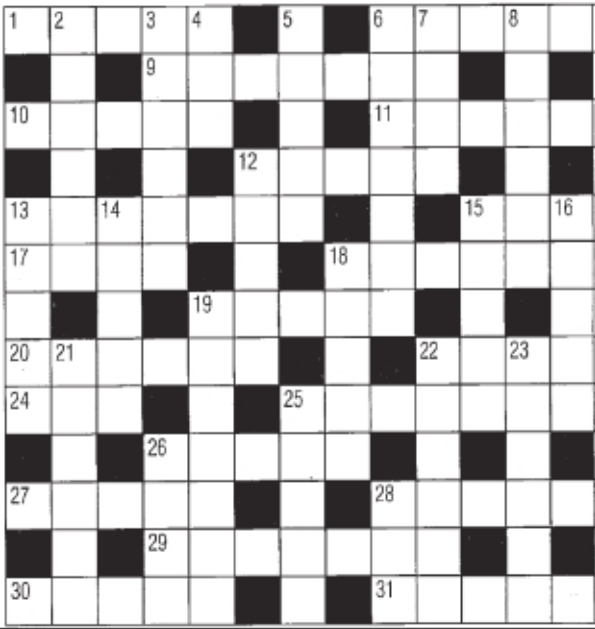
CRYPTIC PUZZLE

ACROSS

- Take steps in time (5)
- Rude remark about a bit of luck (5)
- Comprehensive accommodation for the elderly in a building (7)
- Food a lad's digested (5)
- A ropy old product (5)
- Files for the ringleader to pass around (5)
- Creator of ten line drawings? (7)
- Chap from Harlesden (3)
- The responsibility of a union, usually (4)
- Don't take any rubbish! (6)
- Quoted or mentioned as sighted (5)
- Belief in direct negotiation (6)
- A place to stay, being at a loose end (4)
- Is obliged to hurry when ten short! (3)
- Turn up with many a fresh pink food item (7)
- Allots a soldier five points (5)
- A noise that may come from the pipes (5)
- Mean to get an antique by the end of the day (5)
- Unfortunately, Kansas is state property (7)
- It's hard being broke (5)
- Bird looking good in a gnarled tree (5)

DOWN

- Away with you, Kenneth, and stir things up! (6)
- Links the church with a bad sin (6)
- A burden to shoulder (3)
- Excellent line to trade (5)
- Pep sold wrongly, having been spilt! (7)
- Several astronauts have it, more's the pity (4)
- Effects! (6)
- Pay a redhead, but not for a good time! (5)
- For just a little loan? (5)
- Lacking cover, they need a bit of shade in the rising sun (5)
- Was it superior in forming a link with the moon? (5)
- Young woman embraced by a couple of Poles (5)
- An uncle like Tom (5)
- A number get sick on the 4th of July, but in a nice way (7)
- Big noise in the criminal world? (6)
- Water jump? (6)
- Can a broken leg cause a sensation? (6)
- It's digested quietly, at leisure (5)
- Not quite a grand old lady? (4)
- A name for the master key (3)



EASY PUZZLE

ACROSS

- Tropical bird (5)
- Currency units (5)
- Arthurian knight (7)
- Reject (5)
- Allude (5)
- Derision (5)
- Musical ending (7)
- Tier (3)
- Minerals (4)
- Dress (6)
- Practises boxing (5)
- Disprove (6)
- African country (4)
- Insect (3)
- Stimulus (7)
- Play (5)
- Moroccan capital (5)
- Without (5)
- Esteems (7)
- Celebrated (5)
- Fraction (5)

DOWN

- Seem (6)
- Tallies (6)
- Pale (3)
- Jousting weapon (5)
- Root vegetables (7)
- Biblical garden (4)
- Quake (6)
- Range (5)
- Snake (5)
- Dutch earthenware (5)
- Correct (5)
- Unwanted plants (5)
- Scent (5)
- Began (7)
- Hire (6)
- Shade of red (6)
- Month (6)
- Force (5)
- Challenge (4)
- Encountered (3)

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTIONS

CRYPTIC:: ACROSS: 9, About face 10, Op-press-or 12, Pink 13, F-R-ight 14, Engages 15, Supporter 17, For-estate 18, Strange 19, Paling 20, Flat 23, Get-a-t-able 25, Overloads 26, To-d-O 27, Passed 29, Putters 32, Took issue 34, Super-able 35, Ca-shie-r 36, Ti-ring 37, Who-a 38, Institute 39, Abandoned.

DOWN: 1, Harpists 2, Coin operated 3, Bar-R-et-ette 4, B-egg-ar 5, Mouthful 6, Appearance 7, Weighty 8, Prospectus 11, Sighs (size) 16, O-mate 19, Pie 21, Leaves behind 22, Slater 23, Get stuck in 24, B-ean spro-ut 25, Odd 28, S-wee-tp-ee 29, Pop-in-Jay 30, St-ew-ar-ds 31, Militi-a 33, Ou-s-ts 34, Sc-re-am.

EASY:: ACROSS: 9, Arbitrary 10, Hooligans 12, Keep 13, Agatha 14, Paprika 15, Authentic 17, Neuralgia 18, Drifter 19, Valise 20, Sago 23, Indonesia 25, Ludicrous 26, Aide 27, Fresco 29, Average 32, Eiderdown 34, Pistachio 35, Umpteen 36, Tenors 37, Urdu 38, Costliest 39, Misshapen.

DOWN: 1, Backhand 2, Absent-minded 3, Daughter 4, Mystic 5, Shrapnel 6, Nonplussed 7, Display 8, Escalators 11, Aping 16, Extend 19, Via 21, Aromatherapy 22, Eczema 23, Inadequacy 24, Surmounted 25, Leo 28, Sanctity 29, Abstruse 30, Eloquent 31, Orderly 33, Dupes 34, Panama.

Diane demonstrates a flair for drama

SHE'S a surefire stunner. And Diane Kruger certainly looked like a work of art when she graced the Whitney Museum's Gala + Studio Party Tuesday in NYC.

The Welcome to Marwen actress, 42, proved she had a flair for the dramatic rocking an extravagantly embellished jacket with simple black shorts. Diane's jacket went for maximum glamour, teaming a crystal-encrusted lapels with ostrich feathered sleeves.

Underneath, the partner of Norman Reedus donned a white blouse with a wild winged collar and small knot in the front.

Inside the affair, the German-American beauty sat and chatted with fashion designer and event sponsor, Michael Kors. Kors was classic in his usual uniform of all black. Devon Windsor stunned in a plunging silver Pamella Roland jumpsuit with a cropped jacket to match.

She slicked her platinum locks back into a teased ponytail and added some drama with wings of eyeliner while leaving the rest of her face with a dewy glow. Hilary Rhoda put her best foot forward in a mix of feathered lilac and tinsel-like strands of silver, also from Pamella Roland.



Charlotte puts on a leggy display in red checked mini dress

CHARLOTTE Crosby was flaunting her endless pins on Tuesday night, as she celebrated her beau Josh Ritchie's sister Cassidy's birthday in Manchester. The reality star, 28, flaunted her jaw-dropping figure in the thigh-skimming frock as she exited the Menagerie eatery with one of her pals. Charlotte hasn't held back from gushing about her love for Josh in recent weeks, and the star exclusively told MailOnline last month she's keen for him to pop the question. Charlotte highlighted her tanned physique on the fun-filled outing as she donned the pretty red and white checked mini dress, which she teamed with matching thick-strapped heels.

The ex-Geordie Shore star styled her brunette tresses into loose curls, and carried her essentials in a simple chain-strap bag. As she giggled with her female pal on the fun-filled outing, Charlotte looked to be in great spirits as she celebrated Cassidy's birthday. The star also took to Instagram to post a glamorous snap from the evening, captioning the post: 'Birthday celebrations for my little @_cassidyxr.'

It comes after Charlotte exclusively revealed to MailOnline recently that she wants boyfriend Josh to propose to her before their third anniversary as she admitted she gets 'excited' when looking at wedding pictures - but added she's in 'no rush' to tie the knot. She explained: 'I've definitely got a timescale. If he hasn't proposed in three years, I think I'd be a bit worried.'

'After you've been with someone for three years, I think you know that it's the person you wanna be with for the rest of your life, so you've gotta get a move on really.' The Geordie Shore babe sent fans wild in August last year, when she stated on Twitter that - although she had no ring on her finger - she was going to start planning her wedding. When quizzed about her tweet, Charlotte told MailOnline: 'Obviously I get excited looking at wedding pictures and stuff. 'But, I wouldn't have the first clue of what I'd want or how I'd want it. There's too many choices and it's too much of a head battle.'



Rhian shares hilarious fashion faux-pas after buying a dress

She's known for her keen fashion sense and her stunning figure. But Rhian Sugden had quite the amusing surprise when she bought a dress online, as she discovered the outfit didn't fit her the way she wanted it to.

Posing for a funny Instagram snap, the 32-year-old lingerie model looked shocked as she modelled the sleek yellow dress which left her underwear exposed. The wrap-front dress had a plunging neckline that showed off her cleavage, but the outfit's slip-front skirt was unable to cover her modesty.

Contacting the outlet she bought the dress from, Rhian wrote: 'Hey @thegirlcode_uk is this supposed to be a dress?? I don't think it's a dress. It's a flashers mac.'

Meanwhile, Rhian recently admitted she is 'like a sloth' and will happily 'go to bed at 10am and wake up at midday'.

She has put her love of slumber down to her youthful good looks - also insisting she avoids make-up where possible.

Speaking to The Sun, she said: 'I like my sleep. I can sleep for 14 hours a day. I'm like a sloth. If I'm not working I can go to

bed at 10PM and wake at midday. I think it's a skill, I can sleep anywhere.

'I don't wear make-up unless I have to, so I'm not -rubbing my face to take it off later. I don't even put on lipstick, just lip balm. Unless I am going out with [husband] Oliver or going to an event, I don't put anything on', she added. The blonde beauty also claims that staying out of the sun helps, as well as using a cheap face cream her 66-year-old mother uses - as well as Joanna Lumley and Amanda Holden. The cream —which contains lanolin from sheep's wool and glycerine - paired with a simple face wash is the secret to Rhian's glow, she insists. She also admitted: 'I don't go for healthy eating. I eat pie and mash and fish and chips, and I like white wine. It keeps you feeling young. I drink when I want.'

Rhian wed Oliver Mellor, her boyfriend of six years, in a blissful ceremony by the Mediterranean sea, with their close friends and family in attendance in September, 2018.



Elle celebrates 21st birthday

SHE turned 21 on Tuesday. And Elle Fanning celebrated with a night out at celebrity hotspot Craig's in West Hollywood. The actress was joined by her Teen Spirit director and rumored beau Max Minghella, 33, who was seen arriving separately.

Elle chose a very low-cut floral mini dress with long sleeves. The retro pastel number was gathered under the bust and had a bow. She paired the dress with pink satin platform sandals and a pale pink purse on a long shoulder strap.

She left her blonde hair loose and added shimmery eye-shadow and glossy red lip color. Max, the son of the late Oscar-winning director Anthony Minghella, was dressed more casually in a red and black plaid shirt left unbuttoned over a white t-shirt. He had on shiny blue trousers and a pair of trainers. He is best known for his role as Nick Blaine in Hulu's The Handmaid's Tale. Teen Spirit, which he also wrote and executive produced, is his directorial debut and stars Elle as a shy teen who dreams of escaping her drab life and enters a singing competition.

While they are yet to confirm they are anything more than friends, Elle and Max sparked dating rumors in July 2018 when they were seen holding hands in Florence, Italy. They were also spotted the next month enjoying a night out together in London.



Georgia Toffolo looks chic in an 80s style pink minidress

They have both made their marks on the reality star world, having their roots in Made In Chelsea. And Georgia Toffolo crossed paths with the fashionable Ashley James as they enjoyed a girls' night at Sushi Samba in Covent Garden on Tuesday.

The I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here queen, 24, turned heads in a chic 80s-style fitted pink dress which was cinched at the waist and dipped at the cleavage as she arrived at

the upmarket eatery alongside her fellow reality star, 32. Bows were stitched on the shoulders of her dress which added a touch of elegance to Georgia's feminine look.

The reality star teetered across the wonky cobbles with as much poise as possible in tall heels with decorative frilly straps.

Georgia toted a chic handbag with pink handles and edging to complement her dress as well as her iPhone while on the move.

Also inside Sushi Samba and of Made In Chelsea fame, abs-flashing Ashley was enjoying her evening with her best friend Charlotte de Carle, 32.

The London-based DJ braved the cobbles in her sky-high fuschia heels which matched her spotty miniskirt and elongated her legs. With spring well underway, the presenter kept off the icy edge to the air with a thin black blazer which also tidied up her look.

Earlier in the evening, the reality star celebrated being single and claimed time alone has allowed her to learn to love herself.

Ashley inspired her followers on social media to search for love all around them from friends and family to help them start dating people who are good for them.

'Pitied and patronised' for her single status, the television personality insisted she was happy by herself.

